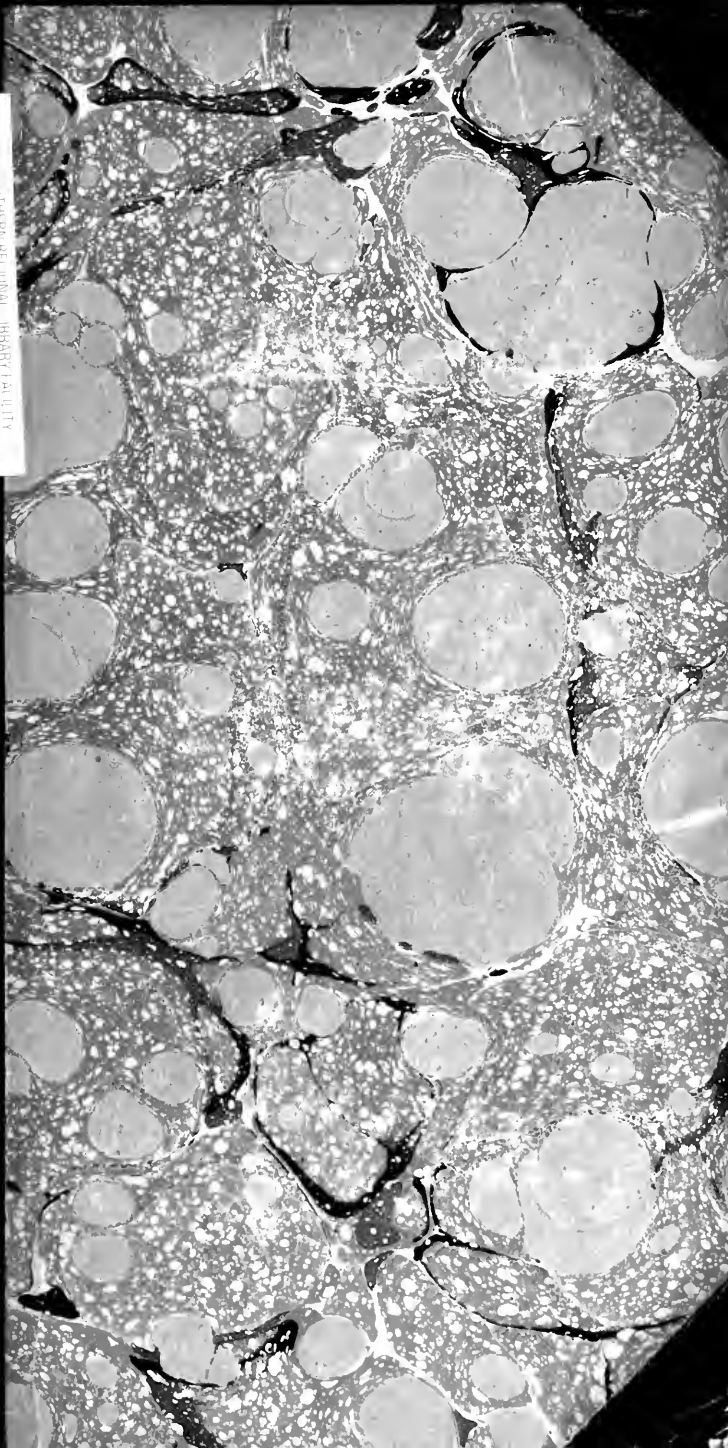


AA0003740875



STARR REF. JOURNAL LIBRARY FACULTY





THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



D A C R E:

A NOVEL.

EDITED BY

THE COUNTESS OF MORLEY.

Un ouvrage d'imagination ne doit pas avoir un bût moral, mais un résultat moral. Il doit ressembler, à cet égard, à la vie humaine, qui n'a pas un bût, mais qui toujours a un résultat dans lequel la morale trouve nécessairement sa place.

BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1834.

TK
488
-52
V. 2

D A C R E.

CHAPTER I.

True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings —
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings.

King Richard III.

It was just as the noisy waiter of a London hotel had removed, with unnecessary bustle, the last remnants of dinner, that Dacre was roused from a deep reverie by Harry Molesworth addressing him.

“It is time now, Dacre,” said he, “that you should hear my story; and you will then, I hope,

forgive me for having brought you away from Hatton.”

Harry Molesworth's story was soon told. He had loved Mary Bingley ever since she was a child. He had called her his little wife when he left home as a midshipman; and his return was always pointed at to her as the reason and object for improvement. She must read well, and play well, and dance well, and mind all her lessons, to surprise cousin Harry; and Harry was duly surprised when he returned home, and would never allow that any other girl of her age had made so much progress. Again he went to sea; and his little favourite was to write to him; and as it saved Mrs. Molesworth a world of trouble that she should do so, she always congratulated herself, when foreign post day came, that Mary was old enough now to write Harry the news. His absence was long;

and time rolled on and made its usual changes, though Mrs. Molesworth never perceived them.

When Harry again returned, the beauties of the child had ripened into womanhood; and whilst Harry soon found in the engaging plaything, the still more engaging companion, Mary felt that the good nature of the boy was exchanged for the devotion of the lover. How soon the parties concerned might have thought fit to reveal these discoveries to each other, may, perhaps, be doubtful; but Mrs. Molesworth, to whom the idea never occurred that the same people in the same house, and under (as she thought) the same circumstances as usual, should alter in their feelings towards each other, was the unconscious cause of their confession of mutual attachment.

She had informed Harry, soon after his return home, of an offer of marriage which Mary

had received and rejected, a short time before. On the evening of the Hatton ball Harry saw her dance with this man, and saw also, by his manner, that, though rejected, he was evidently still an admirer. His jealousy kindled at the sight ; he spoke to her openly ; and no wonder that he found the ball at Hatton “ the pleasantest evening he ever spent.” The next step was to obtain the consent and approbation of relations to their union. Mrs. Molesworth saw no objection to the marriage, provided Mary always stayed, as usual, at Thornbury Park when Harry went to sea ; but, unfortunately, Mr. Molesworth saw great objection to their marrying without the means of supporting themselves after his death, when he could no longer maintain them.

Mr. Molesworth was very kind to Harry on the subject, and so was his brother John ; but

their kindness was of little avail. Every thing was strictly entailed ; and they could not, therefore, advance much towards the income which Mr. Molesworth had named as the *sine quâ non* of his consent. Their hopes now depended on the assistance of Mary Bingley's nearest living relation ; and it was determined, therefore, that application should be made to him in this hour of need. Mrs. Molesworth and Mr. Bingley had been first cousins ; and, on the untimely death of both Mr. Bingley and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth had offered at once to take charge of the poor little orphan Mary. The offer was gladly accepted by her maternal uncle, Mr. Wakefield, on whose care she had the greater claim of nearer relationship.

Mr. Wakefield was a retired merchant, rich and childless. He had always expressed himself with interest and kindness towards Mary, and

had never yet been called upon to give those more substantial proofs of affection which she received in the disinterested protection of the Molesworths. Mr. Molesworth thought the present a fit opportunity to apply to him, therefore, in her behalf. He wrote to him explicitly, and entertained good hope of a favourable reply. No reply came. The suspense was painful; but Harry and Mary were certain the letter or its answer had miscarried. The post must be in fault; and Mr. Molesworth was earnestly entreated to write again. Mr. Molesworth did so; but, less convinced than the lovers of the fallibility of the post office, he deemed it better they should separate whilst their fate was still pending; and Mary found herself obliged to fulfil an old engagement of visiting the loquacious Mrs. Plummer, at the very moment she least wished to quit Thornbury Park.

Mrs. Molesworth saw no necessity for thus deranging the family. She thought her husband had never been so provoking since the time he insisted on sending the boys off to school. But Mr. Molesworth was firm; and Harry and Mary were doomed to wait in anxious expectation of Mr. Wakefield's reply, uncheered by the comfort of each other's society. An answer had been requested by return of post; but the return of post brought no answer. Harry now determined to come up to London, and discover, if possible, the cause of this silence. His first step was to ascertain that the old man was still alive, and had not changed his residence; but it was not so easy to determine the best way of obtaining the wished-for reply.

In this dilemma he wrote such a letter to Dacre as decided him to leave Hatton and join his friend in London. Had Lady Emily been

more kind, the task would have been more difficult: but the post arrived in the evening at Hatton; and, whilst wavering in his mind as to the time he should fix for his departure, his feelings were wounded by a slight misconception of her words. He resolved, at once, to quit Lord Whitby's before he saw her again, and to hasten to London without further delay.

Harry Molesworth was both grateful and surprised at the degree of alacrity with which Dacre had answered his summons; and, in the first pleasure of his arrival, he was almost ready to believe, with the sanguine superstition of a sailor, that the tide of good fortune had already begun to set in his favour. But the case was too serious to admit of delusion; and plan after plan was devised and rejected for assailing Mr. Wakefield with a third application. At last, before the friends separated for the night, it

was determined that Dacre should, if possible, obtain a personal interview with Mr. Wakefield. The excitement of serving his friend had a cheering effect upon Dacre, and in some degree warded off the depression which the result of his visit to Hatton was but too well calculated to produce. He was all activity in the cause; and the following morning he announced himself betimes to Molesworth, as ready prepared to be the bearer of a note of introduction from him to Mr. Wakefield, at whatever hour he deemed best for the object of finding him at home.

CHAP. II.

Oh ! Sir, you are old ;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confines. You should be ruled and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. SHAKSPEARE.

IT was about the middle of the day when Dacre found himself at the door of a brown brick villa on the outskirts of the town. Mr. Wakefield was the creature of habit ; and as he had found it convenient, when daily engaged in business, to reside in one of the many roads that lead to the east end of London, it had never occurred to him, when his occupation was gone, to change either his residence, or his

belief that the desideratum of life was an easy and constant communication with Tower Hill or the Elephant and Castle. The door was opened by a thickset footboy, whose ill-fitting livery suggested the idea that he had just stepped into the gaudy-coloured clothes of his taller predecessor, without any regard to the variety in human form. In answer to the question of, whether Mr. Wakefield was at home, the boy said he “would go and ask master.” — “Master said he was at home;” and, whilst Mr. Wakefield was carefully conning over the note and the card which Dacre had sent in, by way of introduction, the footboy was desired to show “the gentleman” into the drawing-room, with the comforting assurance that “Master will be with you directly, Sir.” When Dacre felt himself so near the moment of interview with Mr. Wakefield, and thought

how much the happiness of his friend might depend on skilful management during the coming hour, he began to grow a little nervous, and looked round the room and examined its contents with something of that desire to forget the object of his mission, which often creates a wonderful degree of curiosity in the waiting-room of a dentist or surgeon.

In the centre of the room was suspended a small glass lustre, carefully enclosed in a dirty white bag; between the windows was a mirror to show people what they are not; and over the chimney-piece was a portrait of Mr. Wakefield in the full dress of a Sheriff of London. Round the sides of the room hung various other portraits of the family; and Dacre amused himself in speculating on the degree of relationship they had borne to each other. An elderly lady with a long crimson nose, light yellow gown,

and muslin turban, sat in her frame with great matronly dignity. A miss of fourteen, in her square white frock, bright coral necklace, and glowing arms, stood screwing her face away from the robin she held in her hand. A large space was occupied on the other side by a little boy on a wooden rocking-horse;—the latter done to the life, and the child to match: and two smaller compartments were filled by a young gentleman in his college cap and gown, and a middle-aged man with his coat as blue, his waistcoat as orange, his buttons as bright, and the fit as true, as though the artist had been a tailor instead of a painter. The furniture was scanty, and not very comfortable, and the tea-caddy with its lino case seemed a cherished and conspicuous ornament.

But Dacre observed, on looking round the room, that there were other ornaments which

seemed rather to belong to the frippery of woman, than to the probable taste of the retired merchant. A table which stood in the corner was exclusively allotted to the sweepings and gleanings of ladies' bazaars and fancy toy-shops. A stuffed canary bird was flying out of its basket into the face of a large black velvet cat ; and there were tempting fruits of stone and wax — cottages for work-boxes — castles for thimbles — and birds for needle-cases, with bodkins for their bills — ingenious devices for making pin-cushions useless, and pen-wipers unfit to be used ; whilst papers, of all colours, were tormented into every conceivable form, for some inconceivable purpose.

Dacre approached the table ; and, for want of something better to look at, cast his eye on this medley of tasteless ornament and useless ingenuity. Little did he expect that, even among the

more valuable knick-knacks of tooth-pick cases, vinaigrettes, old watches, and bad miniatures, that he should discover any object of interest to himself. The foreign-like appearance, however, of the back of one of the little pictures at last attracted his attention, and he was tempted to take it in his hand to examine it more closely. But what was his surprise when, on turning it round, he saw, in the picture of an English officer, one with whose portrait he was perfectly familiar. He held it to the light — he looked at it earnestly — he tried it in different positions — so impossible did it seem that his eyes were not deceiving him, and yet so confident did he feel that he held in his hand the picture of his father.

The more he examined it, the more distinctly did it recall to his mind the well-known portrait of Major Dacre at Hexham; and, whilst his

doubts thus gave way to the force of conviction, a thousand thoughts rushed through his mind with confusing rapidity. Should he find in Mr. Wakefield one who had been a friend of his father's? — if so, Lord Hexham must probably have been aware that he was so; and yet, though he was constantly in the habit of talking of those with whom his brother had lived on terms of friendship, Dacre was sure that the name of Mr. Wakefield had never passed his uncle's lips. But all further speculations on the subject were cut short by the sound of footsteps. He replaced the miniature on the table; the door opened; and Dacre beheld in Mr. Wakefield one who was but too fast shrinking into “the lean and slippered pantaloon.”

Mr. Wakefield was a thin spare little man, attired in a snuff-coloured coat—drab shorts—and white cotton stockings. His head, nearly

bald, was neatly powdered, whilst the few straggling remains of his hair were bound prisoners behind, in the shape of a tail. His sharp-pointed nose, thin compressed lip, and deep-set eye, gave an air of acuteness and thought to the outline of his face ; but the expression was gone. Age, or infirmity, had dimmed the brightness of his eye ; and as his mouth relaxed into a smile, his countenance bore rather the stamp of imbecility than of pleasure.

Mr. Wakefield was in manner rather courteous—very slow—and exceedingly garrulous ; and he dwelt so long on the fog and the cold and unwholesomeness of the winter, that Dacre began to fear he should never obtain a hearing in favour of his friend. At last, however, a fit of coughing came to his assistance ; and before Mr. Wakefield had time to recover his breath, Dacre alluded to the two letters to which Mr.

Molesworth had received no reply. Mr. Wakefield confessed that it had quite slipped his memory to read the second; then drawing from his pocket a large bundle of letters, neatly tied up with red tape, he deliberately wiped his spectacles, placed them on his nose, and proceeded to decypher the docketing of each individual letter.

“Ladies, you know, Mr. Dacre, do not always write very distinctly,” said Mr. Wakefield, as he held up one of the papers to the light. “That word is quite illegible to me,” continued he, pointing to it with his finger.

Dacre explained the word.

“Ah!” said he, with something of a chuckle, “you young gentlemen are more expert at reading ladies’ hands than we old folks; though, to be sure, I ought to know my good Mrs. Shepherd’s writing as well as my own. Here they

are both, I do verily believe !” exclaimed he, gently drawing Mr. Molesworth’s two letters from their bondage. “ I thought I should find them ; for I am a very methodical man, Mr. Dacre.”

It had certainly not occurred to Dacre that he was so.

“ You must know,” continued he, as he slowly unfolded the letter, “ that since I left off having letters of business, I don’t always trouble myself to read those that come just when the postman chooses to leave them : but a friend of mine is so good as to look who they come from ; and she writes their names outside, and then they are neatly tied up for me to read at my leisure. So, with your leave, Mr. Dacre, I will read over Mr. Molesworth’s letters before we discuss the matter.”

The entrance at that moment of a well-

dressed woman, of between forty and fifty, made Dacre fear that the promised discussion never would come. As the door opened, she loudly announced it was "two o'clock." Then, starting, as if surprised at the sight of a stranger, she apologised for the intrusion; saying, "I did not know you were engaged, Sir; I only came to bring you your muffatees and comforter, before you took your airing."

"Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd — thank you!" said the old gentleman, rising from his seat to take them from her hand.

"I suppose," said the lady, as she glanced at Dacre, "I can be of no use to you now, Sir! Will you send for me when you are ready to go out?"

Mr. Wakefield promised to do so; but perhaps he perceived that Mrs. Shepherd did not look quite pleased that her offer to retire was so

readily accepted; for as she slowly turned to quit the room, he changed his mind, and recalled her, saying, in a friendly tone, “ You know you are always useful to me: perhaps you can remember, my dear, what you told me about Mr. Molesworth’s letter. I had no idea an answer was expected so immediately: did you tell me it wanted an answer?”

“ No, Sir !” replied Mrs. Shepherd, drily — “ you asked me to look what it was about, and I told you it seemed to be upon the same subject as the first.”

“ Well ! I dare say you were quite right, though I don’t remember what the subject was — but didn’t you see, my dear, that they wanted an answer ?”

“ No, Sir, I did not indeed; I should never have taken the liberty of opening the letters at all if you had not desired it, and it was not my

business to read them through," replied Mrs. Shepherd, as if rather offended at the supposition that she had done so.

"Ah! my dear Mrs. Shepherd, I know you are always too scrupulous by half," said the old man, in a conciliating tone. "It is not often, Mr. Dacre," continued he, with a laugh that savoured more of embarrassment than merriment — "it is not often that we have to find fault with the ladies for a want of curiosity."

Dacre said something, of course very much to the purpose, in reply.

Mr. Wakefield began to read the neglected epistles; and Mrs. Shepherd arranged the chimney-piece ornaments, and loitered about the room, as if doubtful whether to stay or go.

"It is a most important request of Mr. Molesworth's," said Mr. Wakefield, as he slowly folded the letters — "a most important request

indeed, Mr. Dacre, and one that deserves serious consideration : but Mr. Molesworth has no idea how many calls a man in my situation has upon his purse. I literally never can keep a farthing of ready money by me : isn't it true, Mrs. Shepherd ?”

“ Mr. Wakefield is too liberal, and too good to the poor, to have ready money to spare,” replied Mrs. Shepherd, addressing herself to Dacre.

“ No ! no ! my dear, you are very good, but you must not say that,” rejoined Mr. Wakefield ; and he looked affectionately at Mrs. Shepherd, who knew very well she had said just what she ought : “ but really, Mr. Dacre,” continued he, “ I find money is very scarce now.”

When rich men talk of their poverty, it is a bad sign for those who need their assistance ; and Dacre therefore began to talk of the happi-

ness of his niece, now depending on his kindness; and even to hint at the promise of assistance and protection he had volunteered in favour of the orphan Mary, upon the death of her mother. But it was clear that Mr. Wakefield did not mean to make up his mind in a hurry.

“These are not matters to be settled in a moment,” replied he; “and you know, my dear Sir, that the wish and the power to be of use do not always go together. I must have time, Mr. Dacre, to consider well so important a subject.”

“I beg your pardon, Sir, for interrupting you,” said Mrs. Shepherd, in a more gentle tone of voice than she had yet spoken in, and bending towards Mr. Wakefield; “but I hope you won’t forget Dr. Davies’s orders not to trouble yourself about business whilst you are taking his medicines.”

“ Thank you, Mrs. Shepherd ! thank you, my dear ! how good you are to always take such care of my health ! ”

Dacre expressed his hope, that there was nothing in the present business likely to harass Mr. Wakefield ; and tried the effect of throwing in some well-placed observations on the pleasure of conferring happiness on others, on the virtue of long and strong attachments in general, and on the particular merits of the individual in question : but it was not to much purpose, for Mr. Wakefield repeated his assertion, that he must have plenty of time to consider the matter. Dacre observed that his eye was constantly turned towards Mrs. Shepherd as he spoke ; and it occurred to him that either her presence was the cause of his apparent disinclination to enter more openly upon the subject, or else that he was desirous of obtaining her advice before he

committed himself to any promise. He certainly hoped it might not be the latter; but he felt that in either case it would be unwise to press the matter any further at present.

The conversation was dropped. Mr. Wakefield was sure that Mr. Dacre must stand in need of refreshment; and Dacre, having his own reasons for wishing to prolong his visit, required no pressing to accept the offer of luncheon. The news of the day was discussed; and whilst Dacre affected to listen to its recent effect on the funds, he was thinking how he could best introduce the topic of the portrait that had so deeply engrossed his attention previous to Mr. Wakefield's entrance. But nothing seemed to lead that way, and he was reduced therefore to take some more decisive step to obtain the desired information. He got up; looked at the clock on the mantle-piece; looked out of the

window as if meditating a departure; stepped towards the table that was covered with knick-knacks, and after a short survey took up the miniature; looked at it for a little time very attentively, and then walked towards Mr. Wakefield, with it still in his hand.

“Will you,” said he, looking up at him, “allow me to ask you——” He made a slight pause, for Mr. Wakefield looked askance, as if he was not pleased with the forthcoming question. But Dacre had begun to ask it, and was too much interested to allow himself to be balked. “Will you allow me to ask you” — he proceeded, though in a lower tone,—“I have been very much struck with a remarkable resemblance. I feel a great wish to know the name.”

An instant more, and he almost regretted that he had tried to gratify this wish, for

the effect of the unwelcome question on Mr. Wakefield was much stronger than he at all expected.

“ Not now — another time — another time, my good sir,” said the old man, almost in a whisper, and casting a short suspicious glance towards Mrs. Shepherd, who stood at a little distance. Then shuffling up to Dacre, he took — almost snatched — the miniature out of his hand, and put it hastily into his pocket; looked again at the lady, and made him a sign to be silent. Dacre obeyed the sign, but it was difficult to be silent, when surprise, curiosity, and a thousand shapeless thoughts floated through his mind, and urged him so strongly to ask for further explanation. It was no small relief to Mr. Wakefield, that the entrance of the luncheon at that moment facilitated an immediate change of subject; and every thing on the tray was of-

ferred to Dacre, with an alacrity that proceeded quite as much from the desire to say something, as from the wish to fulfil the duties of hospitality.

Mrs. Shepherd had for some time been busily employed in doing nothing; just as people generally are when they are determined to stay in the room, without any ostensible reason for so doing. But her back had been turned; and whether she had heard Dacre's question concerning the picture, or whether it was on account of her presence, that Mr. Wakefield had been thus anxious to avoid any allusion to it, he had no means of judging. He saw that her face was flushed, as she returned the parting "Good morning:" it might have been agitation that had thus heightened her colour; but he felt that this circumstance could not quite be received as a proof that she had listened to, or been interested by, what had passed.

As Dacre rose to depart, Mr. Wakefield shook him kindly by the hand, and said something about the pleasure of having made his acquaintance. Dacre thanked him, and expressed his hope, in return, of being allowed to tell his friend, that Mr. Wakefield would write to him as soon as he had considered the object of the visit, with which he had taken the liberty of troubling him. Mr. Wakefield followed him to the door; and, as if fearful of being overheard, he promised, in an under tone, that Mr. Molesworth should certainly hear from him in time.

CHAP. III.

Oh ! why did God,
 Creator wise, that peopled highest heaven
 With spirits masculine, create at last
 This novelty on earth — this fair defect
 Of nature, and not fill the world at once
 With men as angels, without feminine. MILTON.

It was lucky for Dacre's conversational reputation that he walked from Mr. Wakefield's alone ; for his mind was completely absorbed by the thoughts and speculations to which his visit had given rise. We often feel disappointed, though we have disclaimed all expectation ; and Dacre was disappointed at the result, or, rather, no result, of his interview. He had scrupulously endeavoured to damp the hopes of his too sanguine friend, as to the success of his undertaking:

but from the moment it was agreed that he should call upon Mr. Wakefield, his own thoughts had dwelt only upon the joyful news, of which he was to be the bearer, on his return ; and he was disappointed that his words, and not his thoughts, were thus verified. It was true that he could tell Harry Molesworth that Mr. Wakefield's silence had been accidental—at least on his part. It was true that he had met with no positive refusal from Mr. Wakefield ; but it was also true that he had seen the influence of a shrewd and cunning woman over the mind of a weak infirm old man. He was persuaded she was unfriendly to the cause, and he therefore regarded it as hopeless.

“ How wonderful ! how inexplicable is the power of woman ! ” said Dacre to himself ; and he mused on the difficult problem of female influence. But he was not in clarity with the sex at this moment ; and he mused till he felt

half inclined to believe that from that source alone sprang every evil in life. What was it that had now placed the happiness of his friend at the mercy of the dotard's liberality, but the influence of woman? What was it that would too surely close the old man's heart against the claims of kindred and justice, but the influence of woman? What was it that had made his own father forget his home, his country, and his character, to bequeath disappointment and mortification to his child, but the influence of woman? What was it that had so embittered the sweets of social intercourse in himself? what was it that had given him that restless gnawing at the heart which drove him from solitude, and created loneliness in crowds? what was all this, but the influence of woman? And when he thought of the cunning look, the half fawning, half imperious manner of the woman he had

just left, — when he thought of the baseness that can disguise its sordid objects in the attentions of female kindness, — his mind recoiled for a moment from the influence he despised.

It was but for a moment ! Perhaps the recollection of the good and gentle Mary Bingley — her, for whose happiness he had that morning pleaded — would partly have checked the indulgence of such a feeling : but when the thoughts of another rose to his mind ; when the radiant image of Emily Somers stood as it were before him ; and when he remembered how he once had seen that face of brilliant beauty and sparkling intelligence turn on him with something of that imploring look of tenderness — that look which affection unconsciously wears, and yet seems to own the power of its object ; when the soft low tones of her melodious voice and her gay laugh sounded in his ear, and he thought of that union of fancy and reason, that mixture

of sense and feeling which characterised her conversation and disposition, he knew well the ties that bind us to a woman's love — he felt the strength of woman's chains, but he forgot their weight, and could not wish for freedom.

Then the picture ! Dacre's thoughts naturally reverted to that extraordinary likeness. He had been so accustomed from his childhood to the sight of his father's portrait — he had looked at it so long, so often, and with so much interest — that he felt as familiar with the features and expression as if he had remembered him in person ; and the resemblance between that portrait and the miniature he had just seen was so strong, he thought he could not be mistaken. Yet the embarrassment of Mr. Wakefield was so unaccountable, that he almost felt he ought to doubt the accuracy of his memory. Mr. Wakefield had evidently been agitated by his

question. He had looked with anxiety towards Mrs. Shepherd ; and had it really been the portrait of his father, how strange that it should be a subject of greater emotion to others than himself ! What connection could ever have existed between Major Dacre and Mr. Wakefield, to cause, after such a lapse of years, such trepidation at a mere allusion to his portrait ?

Mr. Wakefield had had sisters. Dacre remembered to have heard the sad story of the youngest of those sisters. She had been decoyed from school, at an early age, by one of those dangerous heroes of school-girl romance, the gay and idle officer in country quarters. He had soon tired of her society : foreign service had served him as a pretext to desert her — to leave her friendless and helpless, and to break her heart. He had never heard the name of that officer. Did a suspicion — a thought — a

thought unframed in words — glance through his mind? Possibly! but he would not give it place; and in another instant he had begun to think the likeness to his father less certain. He was almost sure he had heard that, broken in health, as well as spirit, Mr. Wakefield's sister had died soon after her desertion; but he was not certain of the fact, and another strange thought darted across his fancy. Who was Mrs. Shepherd? He had regarded her as the interested dependent, but he might have been mistaken.

Dacre's speculations were soon brought to a close. He had reached the corner of the street that led to the hotel, and was instantly joined by Harry Molesworth, who had been too anxiously awaiting his return to delay an unnecessary moment in learning the result of his mission. Harry Molesworth had been quite as hopeful

as if Dacre had not assured him how hopeless he considered his interference would prove. He was severely disappointed, and almost as much surprised as Dacre himself, at finding this prediction so nearly verified. But Harry was of a more sanguine disposition than Dacre. We are always disposed to judge of the future by the past. Fortune had hitherto smiled upon Harry; and he returned her smiles, and looked cheerfully on his prospects: but she had frowned upon Dacre — frowned upon him at that age when the character is most plastic; and his imagination too often gathered round his future those clouds whose presence are afterwards realised by this very anticipation of their appearance.

Harry was still, therefore, hopeful, whilst Dacre desponded — desponded for his friend and for himself: but, happily, confidence be-

gets confidence — and as the two friends sat together that evening, Harry Molesworth learnt that he might expect from Dacre, not only the sympathy of friendship for every obstacle to his love, but that still stronger sympathy, the real fellow-feeling, which makes us all so “wondrous kind.” It was lucky that they had been able to meet at this time, for no two characters were ever better calculated to be of service to each other under existing circumstances; and if Dacre sometimes felt it his duty to damp the over confidence of his sanguine friend, Harry Molesworth as often undertook, in return, the more agreeable task of stimulating the hopes of his too sensitive companion. Perhaps it would have been presumptuous in Harry to have spoken quite as flatteringly of Lady Emily’s liking for Dacre, as the Duchess of Bolton had ventured to speak of Dacre’s admiration for Lady Emily :

but certain it is, that all he did venture to say was very soothing, and, like the Duchess's conversation, was well calculated to promote a better understanding between the parties concerned.

It had been agreed that Harry Molesworth should remain in town till they should hear from Mr. Wakefield. There are, perhaps, not more than two things in this world in which women can be even supposed to have an advantage over men: they are not expected to fight duels, and they are allowed the enjoyment of an endless variety of finger work. They are never obliged to give their friends and acquaintance, who have had the pleasure of saying an ill natured thing, the still further satisfaction of shooting them through the heart on a cold winter's morning; and when they have nothing to think about, or wish to get rid of the thoughts they have, down they

sit, and resigning their whole souls to the cares of cross-stitch and tent-stitch, embroidery and tambour, bead-work and braiding, knitting and netting, chain-stitch and gobble-stitch, hemming and sewing, they beguile in busy idleness the tedium of vacuity or depression. Far other is the case of men. Drawing and cherry-nets are their only resource — for the former, there too often lacks the needful supply of talent — for the latter, alas! the encouragement of a sufficient demand; and then they are reduced to conscious idleness.

Dacre and his friend were just in the position to be sensible of this disadvantage; and so, like others with pre-occupied minds, and unoccupied hands, not knowing what better to do with themselves, they agreed one evening to go to the play. A mere chance had determined their choice of a theatre; and though the stage afforded

but little amusement, Dacre did not repent of the choice. Towards the end of the evening he discovered that seated in the adjoining box was a person of his acquaintance, though he had not at first recognised him as such. He had sat for some time with his face half concealed in the large fur collar of his coat, till something attracting his attention at a distance, his head emerged, for a moment, from its hiding place, and Dacre then perceived that his neighbour was no other than Mr. Crofton.

Dacre knew that Mr. Crofton had come to Hatton on the day he had left it, and however apparently unwilling he had been at first to make his acquaintance, he was now well disposed to renew it; and he gladly took advantage of a move in the box, which afforded him the means of placing himself next Mr. Crofton. Dacre spoke first: at another time he would

have thought Mr. Crofton's manner repulsive, but his mind was wholly occupied at this moment with the thoughts of Lady Emily, Sir Edward Bradford, and the proceedings at Hatton since his departure; and his anxiety was not to be checked by an unprepossessing manner.

He began, as people generally do, to ask first after those who did not interest him, in order to introduce, with ease, the names of those who did. He heard that Mr. Maitland had come to London that day with Mr. Crofton himself — that George Saville had gone two hundred miles off to a battue at Lord Somebody's shooting box — that the Mansels talked of Melton and Paris till after Easter — that the Duke and Duchess of Bolton were to be in London on the following day — and that Lord Clermont and the Prestons were still staying at Hatton. This last piece of information was given in

rather a pointed manner ; just sufficiently so, to let Dacre know that Lord Clermont was his rival, if not successor, in the smiles of Lady Anne. How far his vanity was likely to be piqued by this, must be left to the decision of those who have been placed under similar circumstances ; but he certainly betrayed no signs of emotion, though Mr. Crofton fixed his eye upon him for a moment, as if he expected he would. Perhaps he hoped to stop all further conversation with Dacre by this hint about Lady Anne, for it did not escape the observation either of him or Harry Molesworth, that Mr. Crofton was rather more anxious to be rid of his company than was quite consistent with good breeding.

Still more anxiously, however, did Mr. Crofton appear to avoid all conversation with a man who had followed him soon after he entered the

box, and whom Dacre had observed to greet him with apparent familiarity. There was nothing very remarkable in the look or appearance of this person. His countenance bore the hard, reckless expression of a man of pleasure ; and so did Crofton's : but there was also something of a sporting, underbred air in his appearance, that gave the impression of his belonging to a different grade of society ; and which made the unreturned familiarity of his manner more striking. Dacre's curiosity was still unsatisfied respecting those, about whom he was most interested ; and Mr. Crofton's indisposition to talk could not therefore be heeded till he had learnt something of Lady Emily.

Mr. Crofton had thought Lord Kendal an agreeable man — had no objection to Lady Kendal — was disappointed in Lady Emily Somers — allowed she was pretty, but unin-

teresting, like all other English girls, and would probably be as cold and formal as that icicle, the Duchess of Bolton, whenever she married. "Maitland says," continued he, "that Sir Edward Bradford means to marry her." — "Means to marry her!" How the impertinence of those words grated on Dacre's ear! but he asked with apparent nonchalance whether Sir Edward seemed likely to succeed.

"You may be sure," replied Crofton, laughing affectedly, "I know no more about it than I can help — heaven defend me from the dull details of a virtuous attachment! — it wo'n't do after twenty."

Dacre felt his colour rise, but he smiled, to show he did not mind; and said, Mr. Maitland's interest in flirtations of every variety did not seem yet worn out.

"No," said Crofton, with a soft sarcastic

smile, "it is rather amusing to see that old 'Omnium Gatherum' play at being fresh-minded — it is enough to kill one to hear him speculating upon whether Lady Emily's headache and pale cheeks proceeded from love or illness — as if it could signify."

Dacre thought it did signify very much, though he could not feel quite so sorry as he ought, to hear she had not looked well — and said in a light tone, "he wondered a man of such practised discernment in other people's concerns, as Maitland, had not been able to solve the difficult doubt."

"I believe," rejoined Crofton, "that he is going to give himself up this week to the better understanding of this last bit of gossip; and by next week he will know all, I dare say, from the words of the proposal to the very fractions of the jointure. I told him he might save him-

self the trouble of doing more than asking the Duchess of Bolton how she meant to dispose of her cousin."

"Is she supposed to have such unbounded influence?" enquired Dacre.

"Yes," replied Crofton; "you know women are always led by one another; and I saw they were prodigious friends: the Duchess is just in the sort of position to give her power over the mind of a girl; and women love power as they love their life."

Dacre saw but little to give him pleasure in this assurance of the Duchess's influence, for he had long persuaded himself that it would undoubtedly be used to his prejudice; nor was it by any means agreeable to his feelings to hear Sir Edward Bradford's name thus coupled with that of Lady Emily. But then Mr. Crofton had made some allusion to her not looking well.

was it possible that she paid him the tribute of regret for the pain she had inflicted? Perhaps, after all, her toleration or encouragement of Sir Edward's attentions was only in compliance with the Duchess's wishes — perhaps she was out of spirits — and he longed to ask the questions without number that rose to his lips. But to have given them utterance would have been to betray his feelings — and, indeed, as he found that he had obtained all the information he was likely to obtain from Mr. Crofton, he thought it better to take the hint implied by his persevering determination to originate nothing, and said no more.

It had not been without frequent interruptions from Mr. Crofton's companion that Dacre had even learnt what he did of the party at Hatton; and he could not but feel a little sur-

prised at Crofton's toleration of his forwardness and want of tact ; but what surprised him still more, was to observe that this associate (he could not think he was a friend) of Crofton's was looking rather more intently towards him than is common for those who are unacquainted. Their eyes had scarcely met, ere the look was withdrawn — but it was repeated more than once, and Dacre felt half inclined to be angry at his ill-bred impertinence. Soon after Dacre had ceased to speak, he heard and saw this man ask Crofton who he was ; but instead of hearing, as he expected, his own name in reply, he heard that of “ Mr. Molesworth.” He then saw the glance transferred to Harry, and he distinctly heard the words “ other,” and “ putting on his glove.” Harry was so occupied at the moment, and there could be no doubt of his being

the person designated. Mr. Crofton shook his head, and said in a louder whisper, which Dacre overheard, "I don't know—never saw him before." Shortly afterwards Mr. Crofton rose, nodded to Dacre, and he and his companion quitted the theatre together.

Harry Molesworth and Dacre returned home, and when they had talked over all that Dacre had heard of Lady Emily, often enough to feel sure that nothing could be deduced from the information obtained, they found that both had been equally struck by the manner and vulgarity of Mr. Crofton's companion. Dacre also mentioned the circumstance of his having asked who they were, but it was so difficult to assign any probable motive for Crofton's replies, that they were obliged to come to the conclusion that Dacre could not have heard as distinctly

as he imagined ; and that Mr. Crofton's toleration of such a man was only a confirmation of his reported love of low company. The subject was soon dismissed from their minds, for when they reached the hotel, they found fresh matter of interest and speculation in the shape of a note from Mr. Wakefield. The note was addressed to Dacre, and written in a woman's hand, though in Mr. Wakefield's name. Harry's heart beat quick, as Dacre hastily ran his eye over the paper, to gather faster than he could read, the purport of its contents.

“ Well,” exclaimed Harry, “ what does he say ? Pray, read aloud, and let me know the worst at once.”

Dacre read it aloud ; but the best or the worst was still to be learnt. Mr. Wakefield expressed his wish to see Dacre the following

day, to talk over, as he said, the subject on which they had met before. He named the hour at which he should be at home, and the servant was desired to wait for an answer, to know if Mr. Dacre could call at the appointed time.

CHAP. IV.

Methinks I should know you, and know this man ;

Yet I am doubtful.

SHAKSPEARE.

It will be easily believed by those who have ever been in love, that Harry scarcely closed his eyes that night, and that on the following morning he pulled out his watch almost every five minutes, to ensure Dacre's punctuality.

Dacre was punctual and anxious—anxious as the warmest friendship could desire ; but, as he found himself once more on the way to Mr. Wakefield's, his thoughts sometimes wandered from the more immediate object of his approach-

ing interview, to the recollection of the miniature he had seen in the preceding visit ; and when he had wondered, and expected, and hoped, and feared, over and over again, on his friend's account, he could not help wondering, on his own, whether he should receive from Mr. Wakefield any information concerning the picture. Mr. Wakefield had said, " not now," — " another time." — Would that time be now ? He hoped it might, and yet he secretly dreaded the explanation he desired.

Mr. Wakefield was alone.

" Good morning, my dear sir ! good morning," said he, rising from his seat, and shaking Dacre kindly by the hand ; " I did not expect you so early — pray take a chair, Mr. Dacre. Upon my word," continued he, looking at the clock, " I hardly expected a gentleman from

the West End would have been so true to his time."

Dacre hoped he was not too early.

"Not at all, my dear sir! not at all — we men of business, you know, prize punctuality, but we don't often meet with it now-a-days. Very dirty walking to-day?"

Dacre said it was.

"Then, with your leave, Mr. Dacre, I will ring the bell, to say I'll take an airing this afternoon. — Mrs. Shepherd is not at home, and so," said he, half-laughing, "I am obliged to take care of myself to-day."

Dacre felt glad she was out, though he knew that Mr. Wakefield's decision must have been made before he desired to speak to him.

"Well, Mr. Dacre, I have taken the liberty of asking you to call upon me this morning, in

order that we might have a little talk upon the subject of Mr. Molesworth's letters."

Dacre was all attention.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Wakefield, pettishly, as he got up hastily from his chair, "what a draught of air comes in at that door! I am sure it must be open, or else the outward door is not shut."

Dacre rose, but before he could offer to find out the cause of the draught, Mr. Wakefield had shuffled half way across the room.

"What a strange thing it is," continued he, as he slowly returned from closing the outward door, "that the servants always will leave open whatever ought to be shut — it is very provoking that now-a-days they won't do what they are told;" muttered he to himself.

Dacre thought the interruption still more provoking, but he knew he must be patient.

“ Well, Mr. Dacre,” said he, after a slight pause, “ as I was saying just now, I wish to talk to you about this marriage between a son of Mr. Molesworth’s, and my niece, Mary Bingley. I think I understood from what you said, as well as from Mr. Molesworth’s letter, that unless I came forward in the matter, the young people would be obliged to give up their engagement.”

Dacre told him it was so, and how much their happiness depended on its fulfilment.

“ Poor things !” said Mr. Wakefield, “ it is a sad pity when young people let themselves grow fond of one another, before they know what they shall have to live upon.”

Dacre agreed — but just hinted it was not always possible to peep into the settlements before the attachment was formed.

“ It is very unlucky,” said Mr. Wakefield,

“that there never was a time in which I was more hard pressed for money than the present : my niece could not have chosen a worse moment for wishing to marry.”

Dacre felt no doubt but that a refusal was at hand, and began to think how best he could combat it.

“I am sure I never thought I could have managed to do any thing for her ; but,” continued Mr. Wakefield, with a little chuckle, “ladies, you know, Mr. Dacre, are very clever at helping one another, and I consulted my good friend Mrs. Shepherd upon the matter. She understands my affairs well ; and you will be glad to hear she has pointed out a way, that I had never thought of ; so I hope, my dear sir, the young folks will be happy.”

Dacre could scarcely conceal his astonishment, whilst he expressed his extreme pleasure at this

announcement. It was so contrary to his expectations — so very delightful — yet so very strange, that Mrs. Shepherd should actually have been the means of forwarding that, which he had felt certain she would, if possible, prevent.

“ Ah ! Mr. Dacre, I knew you were so much interested about your friend, that I was sure you would be glad to hear of the arrangements I can make in favour of my niece. Mrs. Shepherd says I must write to Mr. Molesworth a real business letter about it all to-morrow, but we agreed that it would only be fair that you should be told of it first.”

Dacre thanked him for his consideration towards himself, and said something of the obligation that Miss Bingley and his friend would feel for Mrs. Shepherd's kind sympathy.

“ She is, indeed, my dear sir, a real treasure.

There are not many such in the world. To me she is quite invaluable; for without her care and kindness, mine would be a sad cheerless life, Mr. Dacre." The old man's voice rather trembled as he spoke: he looked for a moment at the portrait of the boy that hung in the room; and a tear glistened in his eye. "We all have our troubles, you know, Mr. Dacre," continued he; "and I have had mine; and poor Mrs. Shepherd has had hers. Poor thing! hers is a sad story; and nobody knows her worth who does not know all she has gone through."

Dacre most anxiously desired to hear the history of Mrs. Shepherd; for the thoughts of the picture were vivid in his mind, and he could not help expecting that her story might possibly bring some mention of his father — some explanation of the likeness in the miniature.

“ Mrs. Shepherd, then, I presume, sir, is an old friend of yours ? ” said he, enquiringly, in hopes of eliciting some further details.

“ She is, indeed,” replied Mr. Wakefield ; “ and a tried and faithful friend. — *He* first brought her to this house,” said he, pointing to the picture of the child ; “ and she actually came as his nurse.” Dacre looked surprised. “ You may well look surprised,” continued he ; “ but so it was. The birth of that little boy made me a widower. Mrs. Shepherd’s husband was in distressed circumstances, and — would you believe it — she forgot her rank in society, and, for his sake, she actually determined to go out to service.”

Dacre said it was, indeed, a most praiseworthy sacrifice ; and Mr. Wakefield went on, as soon as a fit of coughing would allow him.

“ I did not know who she was for a long

while; but, as I could not bear to part with her, after all her kindness to my poor child, I persuaded her to be my housekeeper."

Dacre observed that it must have been very distressing to Mr. Shepherd's feelings that his wife should, for his sake, make any such sacrifice.

"Lord bless you, my good sir! he never knew any thing about it. It would have broken his heart to have heard it. But his name was not Shepherd: that was her maiden name: his name was Harrison."

"Mr. Harrison was abroad, then, I suppose, sir?" rejoined Dacre.

"You shall hear, Mr. Dacre, — you shall hear. Mrs. Shepherd, as I told you before, was my housekeeper; and I never even knew that she was married till I saw her in weeds, and then she told me her story. Poor soul! — she

had kept all her sorrow to herself. Her husband, Lieutenant Harrison, was a man of very respectable family: his circumstances were sadly embarrassed; but he was proud, and would never have borne the humiliation of his wife foregoing her proper station in life; so, whilst he was away on foreign service, she resumed her maiden name, and supported herself by her own exertions. There are not many women, Mr. Dacre, that would, I think, have had the spirit to behave like that," said Mr. Wakefield, with a tone of triumph.

Dacre praised Mrs. Shepherd's praiseworthy energy, and hoped that Lieutenant Harrison had been fully sensible of the merits of his wife.

"Yes; she says he was very fond of her. I dare say they had been very happy together, poor things! for she can't bear the mention of his name, now; it always upsets her for the day."

Dacre asked if her husband had been killed in action.

“ I think not,” replied Mr. Wakefield ; “ at least I know she said his death was not gazetted, — he was only returned as missing. I am pretty sure,” said he, rubbing his forehead, and trying to recollect ; “ I am pretty sure she told me he was taken prisoner, and died in the enemy’s prison. It is many years ago, now, — my memory is not so good as it was, so that I can’t be quite so certain how he died ; and I never like to let her talk about it — it makes her so nervous.”

Dacre said it must certainly be a most painful subject.

“ Yes, Mr. Dacre, it is, indeed ; and it distresses her, she says, to worry me with her misfortunes ; and so, till the other day, we have not mentioned the subject for a long while.

But, poor soul ! she wished me to tell you all about her, for fear you should think her strange or rude."

" Me, sir !" said Dacre, in undisguised astonishment.

" Yes — about the picture, you know."

Dacre leant forward with an expression of interest in his countenance that could not have escaped the observation of any one whose perceptions were less deadened than Mr. Wakefield's. " Dear me," continued he, " how stupid I am ! I forgot I had not told you about that miniature. Don't you remember, Mr. Dacre, that you asked me about a little miniature the other day ? Oh dear, I was so distressed for fear she should hear you, for — only think ! — that was the portrait of poor Mr. Harrison ! Unluckily, she did hear your question, but she bore it pretty well."

Dacre expressed his regret that he should so unintentionally have distressed her.

“ She knew it was accidental, but she was so afraid you should have thought her wanting in politeness, that she begged I would explain it all to you. I have advised her to lock it up in future, for you know it is very natural people should ask questions, and it is not always she can control her feelings.”

Dacre again apologised for his indiscreet question, adding, by way of exculpation, that an extraordinary resemblance to a portrait of his father had made him desirous of knowing whose likeness it was.

“ Really ! ” exclaimed Mr. Wakefield, in a tone that approached to childish surprise, “ really ! you don’t say so ! well, that is very curious. I am sure it made it very natural you should wish to ask about it. I don’t think the portrait is

like you ;” said he, looking up at Dacre, “ and Mrs. Shepherd did not say she thought you like poor Mr. Harrison ; but then you know, my dear sir, people are as often like their mothers as their fathers — perhaps you are like your mother.”

Dacre merely said, in reply, that it was very possible ; and then, thinking that the conversation was taking a turn by no means agreeable to his feelings, he rose to depart — thanked Mr. Wakefield for his kindness, in having thus allowed him to be the messenger of joyful tidings to his friend — spoke with confidence of the gratitude that both Harry Molesworth and Miss Bingley would feel towards him for his liberality — heard again that it was all Mrs. Shepherd’s doing, and then took his leave.

Mr. Wakefield’s brief sketch of the life and adventures of Mrs. Shepherd called up a strange

succession of thoughts in Dacre's mind. The mystery was cleared away. The wished-for *éclaircissement* had taken place; and Dacre had been relieved, and disappointed, and ill satisfied at the result—relieved, that none of his evil anticipations had been realised, disappointed at the conversion of an object of interest into one of indifference, and ill satisfied with a solution of his doubts, which it was difficult to believe, and yet impossible to disprove. The strong indisputable fact of the resemblance to the portrait of his father had in no way been accounted for, and the less he felt alarmed at identifying the likeness, the more striking and indubitable did it seem. Mr. Wakefield had spoken of Mr. Harrison as a lieutenant. Dacre remembered having observed that the uniform in the picture was that of a captain; but then Mr. Wakefield's memory was so obviously on

the wane, that it was scarcely possible to deduce any positive inference from his having so called him.

As Dacre drew nearer to home, the pleasing anticipation of the happiness of his friend took place of every other thought ; nor did the reality disappoint his expectations. Harry was all joy and gratitude — grateful to Dacre for his trouble, and grateful to Mr. Wakefield for his kindness to Mary Bingley — convinced that Mrs. Shepherd must be an angel instead of an officer's widow in disguise — surprised that Dacre could ever have doubted her worth — heard with pity the tale of her woes, and was almost impatient with Dacre for wasting another thought on the miniature, now that the veracity of Mrs. Shepherd, and the good sense of Mr. Wakefield, were so satisfactorily established by their liberal conduct.

Dacre was anxious that the arrival of Mr. Wakefield's letter to Mr. Molesworth should precede the return of Harry to Thornbury Park. Perhaps, in the innermost recesses of his heart, there still lurked a faint suspicion that Mr. Wakefield might not be permitted to fulfil his kind intentions. If so, he would not listen to, and still less give utterance to such a gloomy thought—but he knew that Mr. Molesworth would object to his son seeing Mary, till he had heard from Mr. Wakefield what he meant to do for his niece, and he also knew that Harry would be impatient of any such delay. Under these circumstances, therefore, though he made no attempt to stop the current of gladness that flowed through Harry's every thought and word, yet he was well pleased to have succeeded in persuading him to postpone his departure for one whole day.

Mr. Wakefield was true to his word; and Harry Molesworth arrived at Thornbury Park in time to be despatched himself to Mary Bingley, as the messenger of the joyful intelligence contained in her uncle's epistle.

Poor Mary! from the time Mr. Molesworth had deemed it expedient she should pay her visit to Mrs. Plumer, she had endured a severe penance from the never-ceasing loquacity of the good old lady. Mrs. Plumer was one of those who have the power to interrupt without diverting the thoughts of others; and though Mary was always civil and amiable, she found it rather difficult, when Mrs. Plumer speculated on who was knocking at the attorney's door, and whose carriage could be so constantly stopping at old Mrs. Pye's, and who was walking with young Mrs. Bunn, not to answer with the names of Mr. Wakefield and Harry Molesworth. More-

over, Mrs. Plumer was aware of the state of affairs between Mary and young Molesworth; and whenever, therefore, her attention was not attracted by the passing objects of the country town in which she lived, she repeated to Mary over and over again, all that she had perceived, and surmised, and suspected of the flirtation, before any body else had noticed it, and before either Harry or herself had a notion of it themselves; and then she wisely expected and predicted all things most contrary to each other, to secure to herself the certainty of having guessed beforehand, whatever came to pass.

Poor Mary! it had been a wearisome day. Mrs. Plumer had told "o'er the weary tale" many a time; and she had listened with patience, if not attention, to all that was not worth hearing, and she was wondering when her hostess would finish winding the interminable skein of

worsted she had sentenced her to hold, and hoping that dressing time would soon come, when a ring at the bell announced a visitor. Before Mrs. Plumer had time to mention above four people whom it might possibly be, Harry Molesworth was in the room. The letter in his hand, and the smile on his face, told Mary at once that their happiness was secured; and tears of joy glistened in her eyes, as she returned the warm pressure of her lover's hand.

Dacre had been much too unselfish, not heartily to sympathise in the feelings of his friend. He had shared his anxiety—he had exulted in his success—he had rejoiced in his happiness; and it was not till after they had parted at the place from whence Harry was to start, that he felt the contrast of their situations fall like a blight upon his spirits. Harry was beloved by the object of his affections, and he

knew that he was so. He enjoyed the blessings of parental love; he stood foremost in the affection of a brother; he had a home—not a home in name only, but a home in feeling—a home in the house of his youth.

A home! what a host of pleasing thoughts are comprised in that single blessed sound! Perhaps the universal tendency to magnify the troubles of the present, and the enjoyments of the past, contributes not a little to enhance the value of early recollections—and whilst the chain of memory that hangs to that one loved word, recalls, at each link, the joys and pleasures of our budding life, time has softened or effaced the traces of sorrow that had too often accompanied their existence. The childish frolic is remembered, and the reproof forgotten. The fruits of education are gathered, but the toil of cultivation is not remembered. The mother's

care in sickness has been treasured in the mind, though the pain has long ceased. Then the father's indulgence, the attachment of dependants, and that partnership in mischief and disgrace, in pleasure, in industry and reward, that binds brothers and sisters together by a bond which maturity strengthens, but cannot create—all combine to associate the feelings of affection and gratitude, with the habitation of our childhood, and to enshrine in our hearts the sacred love of home.

It was true that many of these blessings had been wanting to Dacre in his early life. He had been an only child, and an orphan: but he had loved his home; and the sound of that word alone recalled the vision of a period untainted by mortification, whilst memory quickly summoned the images of all who were associated with that happy time, and of all that had

ministered to the amusement of his childhood. The fondness, the caresses, the instructions of his uncle; and the care and solicitude of his father's old nurse—the long corridors and mysterious dark passages, where he had played “hide-and-seek,” half fearful, half daring, with the chance playmates who came to the house—the old keeper to whom he was intrusted to use his first gun—the pride of the groom who taught him to ride—the first pony—the pet dog—the pond on which his mimic boat was borne triumphantly by the zephyrs of a summer's day—the lake on which he had learnt to row—the pictures he had misused for targets to his arrows—the favourite grotto, where he studied the adventures of Crusoe till he pined for the comforts of a desert isle—the garden—the pleasure-ground—the woods—the avenues—the park—the every thing at Hexham was

endeared to his heart, by the long treasured associations to which they were linked ; and yet time and circumstances had deprived him already of the sight of all to which these feelings belonged. Harry Molesworth had been often invited to be the playfellow of his earliest childhood ; and it seemed that he alone remained, of those, to whom Dacre could say, “ *we*,” when he talked of those times.

But Hexham was not Harry’s home ; and Dacre knew that he had stronger and dearer ties elsewhere. Their mutual friendship had been undoubtedly cemented by this meeting in London ; but when they parted that morning, he had marked the look of happiness that lighted up young Molesworth’s face, as he reckoned the few short hours that would restore him to his home ; and now that all excitement had subsided,

all incentive to exertion was over, Dacre felt that he was alone in the world.

Madame de Staël has truly said —

“ Lorsque sur cette terre on se sent délaissé,

“ Qu’on n’est d’aucun mortel la première pensée,

* * * * *

“ On se désintéresse à la fin de soi-même,

“ On cesse de s’aimer, si personne ne nous aime.”

Dacre felt the bitter consciousness of this truth. He had fortune—he had advantages that many would sigh for, but he was lonely. He felt that to one only could he look for the creation of a home and its joys, and yet he dared not indulge himself in the contemplation of a picture, which he could scarcely hope to realise.

CHAP. V.

Oh! thou resort and mart of all the world,
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes ; in whom I see
Much that I love, and more that I admire,
And all that I abhor. COWPER.

DACRE had determined to remain in London for a few days after Harry's departure, lest the letter from Mr. Wakefield should call for further interference, in which he might be useful. He was not inclined for society, and he therefore abstained from all visits, and avoided such places as he knew to be the idle haunts of men of his acquaintance.

Nothing is easier than for a man of fashion

in London to remain *incog.* by the mere study of the sights and sounds, of different hours. First comes the loud shrill call of “*Sweep!*” — and badly indeed must the idle man in London sleep, who hears that call. But when the loud sonorous cries of fish and vegetables resound with unbroken noise through the street — when at each door may be seen a dirty maid in paper curls, sweeping from the hall, or twirling a mop, or washing the steps — when the emissaries of the dealers in fish and fowl, the butcher, the baker, the grocer, the cheesemonger, and the milkman, maintain their undisturbed possession of the pavement as they whistle loudly along, — when, in short, London reveals in the streets, the arcana of domestic economy, and seems turned, for the time, into the huge offices of its own vast self, — then, perhaps, may a man

like Francis Dacre, engaged neither in the business or dissipation of the Metropolis, be expected to be almost ready for breakfast.

Breakfast over—the newspaper half read, and lo! another change of scene and sound from without. The little milliner trips quickly along with her oil-skin covered basket—troops of children with fat nurses, and young nursery maids, flock along the pavement—the hand-organs grind the popular airs of the last season, whilst the clarinet and bag-pipes screech and whine out those of the preceding century. The rumble and gingle of carts becomes frequent, whilst the rapid approach and departure of the quick driven chariot bespeaks the physician or the man of business on the move.

This, then, is the moment for the *incognito* to sally forth—now may he walk through the squares, and places, and streets, and parks,

secure of meeting none of those to whom London owes its West-end reputation for wealth, luxury, beauty, elegance, and idleness. But let him not tarry till too near the hour of luncheon—for then will be seen in motion, figures of well dressed men, with an air “as if it was somebody one knows,”—and then, perhaps, a cab, drawn by a gigantic horse, of violent action, making scarcely any way, with the child just fresh from an infant school standing behind—two examples in life of the *parvum in multo* and the *multum in parvo*—and the roll of carriages is more constant—and Mr. Maitland is sure to be abroad—for he never lunches at home.

Our recluse has escaped from the danger of seeing his numerous friends and acquaintance—and now in vain he tries to read—in vain he tries to think.—All London is in motion; and the din and tumult of the Metropolis echoes

through his head, and the sounds of carts and omnibuses, coaches, cabs, carriages, horses, and men, are all blended together in one overpowering noise—whilst the bands of musicians—the trumpet of punch—the applause of the Fantoccini—the barking of coach-dogs—the musical monkies—the hurdy-gurdies of white mice—the nasal twang of a French woman’s voice—and the guttural grunt of the “Buy a broom” girls, lend their never-failing aid to disturb the man who would be quiet.

But patience! All will again be hushed.—The post bell has driven you half mad for half an hour; but then, either in spring, or in summer, the worst of the bustle is over—troops of gay parties on horseback have turned homewards—ladies without number are to be seen dismounting at their doors. Exhibitions are all closed—and their human advertisers are seen march-

ing in single file from their posts with the advertisements on their backs again. The noise of wheels subsides, and is heard only at intervals. Every body is now busied in preparation for dinner, or enjoying the fruits of the morning's activity, and all is more quiet than since the hour when poor little "Sweep" first gave note in the morning that occupation was resumed; till the rumble of the diners-out gives once more an occasional disturbance to the long-wished-for stillness.

For some few days Dacre availed himself of the warning sounds and signs of the Metropolis, and successfully avoided all whom he knew — but, Cinderella-like, he forgot the hour, and a rencontre with Mr. Maitland was the punishment. "Hallo! Dacre! you in town still!" and "What keeps you here, when the shooting season is not over?" and "Seen Lady Anne

this morning?" were questions that instantly greeted his ear. To be sure Mr. Maitland gained little from the answers ; but then he had something to mention to those on whom he called, and he was not without hope of eliciting something from them, as to the cause of Dacre being in town, and yet going no where.

The following day, as Dacre returned from a stroll, he found on his table a note, and a card. The invitations were both for the same day — a kind note from Lady Anne insisting on his joining her party at the play, and a formal request of the honour of his company to dinner from the Duke and Duchess of Bolton. He felt rather inclined to decline both, but he had no good reason for so doing, and then he doubted which he should accept. Lady Anne's note was very friendly : he was sure of being well received by her. The Duchess's invitation was probably

an act of civility of the Duke's; for he was confident she positively disliked him. Both had been in company with Lady Emily, since he had seen her, and the Duchess was her first cousin; but then, as Crofton had said she was determined on promoting a marriage with Sir Edward Bradford, he had no hopes of hearing any thing of Lady Emily from her, and should probably be doomed to hear the praises of Sir Edward, if not to meet him. — No ! he would not dine at Bolton House. He was more likely to learn from Lady Anne whatever he wished to know — and if not that, he was at least certain of hearing nothing that was disagreeable to his feelings from her. Accordingly, a refusal and an acceptance were severally written and despatched; and Dacre found himself, at the appointed time, in Lady Anne Preston's box at the play.

When he entered, Lady Anne was listening

with the greatest attention to some information Mr. Preston was generously bestowing on her. They were, in fact, *tête-à-tête* ; and, whenever there was no body else to be captivated, Lady Anne always filled up the time by employing her powers of fascination upon her own husband. Mr. Preston had been describing, with green-room-like technicality, some trifling stage directions, and had arrived at criticising some anachronisms in the dresses of the actors, when Dacre arrived. Lady Anne shook him cordially by the hand, but continued to enter with apparent interest into all that Mr. Preston had to say. To have cut short his discourse too abruptly, would have been injudicious. Lady Anne knew well that such a change would have destroyed the effect of her previous attention. She only ceased to give him the encouragement of questions that so flatteringly implied his

power to give her information, and then it died a natural death, and she could safely turn to Dacre.

Mr. Maitland next arrived in the box; and to show how well he knew what was “the right thing” to do, he scarcely spoke to either Dacre or Lady Anne, but instantly applied himself to engaging Mr. Preston in conversation. Something amusing passed on the stage. Dacre laughed, and so did Lady Anne.

“Do you know,” said she, lowering her voice as she spoke — “do you know I invited you to-night for the express pleasure of having somebody who would enter into my own feelings during the play? — so remember,” added she, playfully, “that I expect you, all this evening, to laugh when I laugh, and cry when I cry.” — Dacre promised to do his best, and Lady Anne kept up a well-managed little fire of *persiflage*

and sentiment, that could not fail to make Dacre feel how agreeable she could be.

In time they recurred to the subject of Hatton, and Lady Anne gave an amusing account of Mr. Crofton's short visit to the Whitbys — his shivering horror of the wholesome habits of English people, in an English winter — his telling Lord Whitby, in the falseness of his heart, that he meant to be a good country gentleman, and the threatened punishment of his hypocrisy, by a view in detail of what Lord Whitby designated as "*my wild fowl, my keepers, my styes, my stalls, my kennel, and my justice-room,*" — and a lecture from Lady Whitby as to what schools, hospitals, &c. it would be right and popular for him to become a subscriber — his hopeless efforts to disguise how bored he was, and the evident difficulty under which he laboured to adapt his conversation to the simple

tastes and understandings of what he called *l'aimable jeunesse*, and his vain attempts to stop Lady Whitby from telling him of all Lady Maria's proficiencies, and Mrs. Ashby's ill-concealed consciousness that he was the unmarried possessor of Hexham House. Perhaps Lady Anne knew well, beforehand, that Dacre was likely to be no unwilling listener to such an account of Mr. Crofton ; and certainly he gave her no reason to change her mind ; for, as she was very entertaining, and there was nothing that Dacre had either seen or heard of Crofton which gave him a favourable impression of his character, he enjoyed all she had to tell.

Then came the Kendals on the *tapis* : that was just what Dacre wished. Lady Anne had not much liked either Lord or Lady Kendal. She pronounced the latter to have very little in her ;

and she thought Lord Kendal was singularly proud and illiberal for so clever a man.

Dacre endeavoured to ascertain on what grounds she had formed that opinion; but Lady Anne avoided giving any direct answer. She only looked as if she could have justified her impression, but forbore to do so; and it instantly occurred to Dacre, that it was probably founded on some remark or opinions of Lord Kendal's respecting himself, and he said no more.

Lady Anne, however, had more to say of that family. She had been so delighted with Lady Emily, — she was so accomplished — so very lovely — so very brilliant — quite the sort of beauty that lights up a room. — “ You can't think,” added she, “ how gay and agreeable she was after you were gone! in fact, *entre nous*, if it had not been for her loveliness,

and her singing, and acting, we should have found it very dull."

"What acting?" said Dacre; who instantly figured to himself the frightful picture of Sir Edward Bradford and Lady Emily, performing as hero and heroine of the piece.

"Oh! the acting was nothing worth mentioning," replied Lady Anne; "merely some charades to please the children: but Lady Emily was very amusing; though, to be sure, it was a little coquettish of her to select an old woman's part; for she made herself look just old enough to show how little age could impair her beauty."

"Her looking so well might be more her misfortune than her fault," said Dacre, smiling, as he felt relieved at finding it was no worse. "I don't believe she has the reputation of a coquette."

"No!" rejoined Lady Anne; "I am sur-

prised to hear people say so; for I am sure, in general, she seems positively to despise the homage of her admirers. Perhaps one should hardly like to see one's sister, or one's daughter, quite so insensible; and yet I don't know, — there is something one cannot help respecting in such perfect self-government. I dare say she will make a much better marriage than if she were more sensitive; and I rather think Lord Kendal will expect his son-in-law to have as many quarterings as an Austrian Noble."

Dacre smiled; not with his feelings, but with his mouth. Nothing sprang readily to his lips, that could be said in answer to these observations; and so he devoted himself to listening to what was passing on the stage.

In a short time the door of the box again opened, and Sir Edward Bradford made his appearance. Sir Edward was in very good spirits,

and, as usual, in very good humour, and decidedly agreeable: but Dacre could hardly help fancying, at times, that his manner was meant to be offensively triumphant; and he began to regret that he had come to the play.

“Bradford, have you seen any thing of the Boltons since they arrived?” asked Mr. Maitland, who wanted to discover whether Crofton was right in saying that the Duchess meant to make the marriage between him and Lady Emily.

“I met the Duchess yesterday. I had forgotten that they were to be in town so soon,” replied Sir Edward, carelessly.

“I fancied that you were to have dined there to-day,” continued Mr. Maitland. “They have a great dinner, I know.”

“Very likely,” said Sir Edward, laughingly; “but, my dear fellow! you, who know every thing about every body, ought to be aware that

they have always omitted even the preliminary step to my dining with them."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Maitland; "you don't really mean that you never were invited to dinner there?"

Sir Edward was not a little amused at Mr. Maitland's gravity upon the subject. "It is certainly very humiliating," he replied, "to make such a confession; but, between friends, such is the fact."

"Upon my word it is too bad!" muttered Mr. Maitland, shaking his head, and looking rather important. "This is just the sort of thing that spoils the society at Bolton House. They never do ask the right people; and so I have told the Duke a hundred times. I even took the trouble of writing him out a list, once, of the right people to have at dinner; and your name was down of course. It is a great pity

that a man in his situation should not attend more to those sort of things," continued he, in something of a soliloquising tone.

Dacre had heard enough now to make him thoroughly repent not having dined at Bolton House instead of coming to the play ; and whether this feeling gave him an intense interest in the performance, or made him feel that even Lady Anne's conversation had grown quite flat, it matters not to enquire ; but certain it was that, for the rest of the evening, he looked towards the stage ; he scarcely spoke ; and, before he left the theatre, had resolved to call upon the Duchess of Bolton the following day.

The following morning he fulfilled his intention, and called at the hour when he thought the duchess was most likely to be at home ; but of course she was out, as who is not that ought to be at home ? He let two days elapse,

and then called again. They had left town that morning to return to their place in the country. Disappointments like these, though apparently trifling, are real trials to those who, like Dacre, measure their value rather by their possible than their positive consequences; and, like all disappointed men, he began to talk of going abroad. "Any thing," thought he, "will be preferable to the wretched slavery in which I am kept by my present state of feelings. Long absence may help to bring me to a better frame of mind;" and he reached a map to trace out a pilgrimage to the East. "That must be my route," said he to himself, as he completed with his finger the tour he would make; "and long before I have accomplished this journey, she will be another's. If she is but happy, I ought to be reconciled to my fate; and should I live to return, ambition

shall be my mistress. I will not for ever lead this useless life. Every man has duties to perform; and I will try and fancy, like other patriots, that I am serving my country."

Perhaps these resolves succeeded, at least for the moment, in tranquillising his irritable feelings; for, strange to say, such is often the effect of imposing on ourselves the task we should have regarded as an aggravation of evil, had it sprung from another.

Dacre had long promised a friend in the neighbourhood of London to pay him a visit; and, thinking the present a good opportunity for fulfilling his promise, a day was again fixed for his leaving town. It occurred to him that it would be but a proper attention on his part once more to pay his respects to Mr. Wakefield. Mr. Wakefield had treated his friend Harry with so much kindness, and himself with

so much civility, that it was natural Dacre should wish to show him attention in return; and, perhaps, he scarcely acknowledged to himself that he was actuated by any other motive in calling upon him. But such was not quite the case. In spite of Mr. Wakefield's distinct assertion that the miniature was the portrait of Lieutenant Harrison — in spite of Harry's strongly expressed conviction that Mr. Wakefield and Mrs. Shepherd must be incapable of deviating from the truth — in spite of his being himself convinced that he had misjudged Mrs. Shepherd during his first interview with Mr. Wakefield, and even in spite of the impossibility of accounting for her possession of a picture that was really the portrait of his father, — he could not help sometimes bestowing a thought on this strange resemblance; and he felt a desire to have the chance of again seeing Mrs.

Shepherd, or of affording Mr. Wakefield another opportunity of talking about her; and accordingly he called.

On asking whether Mr. Wakefield was at home, the footboy looked wistfully at Dacre, and said in a half doubtful tone, “he believed not.”

Dacre asked if he was sure that Mr. Wakefield was out.

The footboy replied by asking, “if he would be so good as to tell his name.”

Dacre mentioned his name, giving him at the same time one of his printed cards.

“No, sir!” said the boy in a more resolute tone. “I know my master is not at home.”

Dacre felt quite sure that Mr. Wakefield was at home: he even thought that he had heard his voice whilst speaking to the servant; but he had no right to turn a visit of civility into one

of intrusion, and he therefore returned upon his steps, wondering to himself all the way, whether it were possible that his admission to the house had been forbidden, or whether it was only the ungainly manner of the little lackey that had given it that appearance.

CHAP. VI.

Now through her woods *the country* calls,
 And echoes talk along her halls
 Of many a kitchen blazing hot,
 Of many a cellar cool as grot;
 Each with its rich abundance stored
 To crown the hospitable board:
 Their social ease and welcome warm
 How ill exchanged for state and form!
 Give freedom to each happy guest,
 Never tormented, never pressed,
 Except to do what suits him best.

LUTTRELL.

As the novelist can never be expected like the dramatist to submit to the thralldom of respecting the unities, we will transport the reader at once to the Duchess of Bolton's boudoir at Denham; and we will further use the author's privilege of reading over her shoulder the letter

from Lady Emily Somers, which she is so attentively perusing. It was as follows :—

“ My dear Caroline. Your kind invitation to pass a few days with you at Denham has luckily arrived at a moment when I can best be spared from home. I have got leave of absence for a whole week, on condition of returning quite early on Saturday. On that day, the repose and quiet that the pheasants and I have enjoyed of late will be invaded by a large party of sportsmen, with their wives and daughters. I rather hope that you and the duke will be alone, and indeed I inferred from your letter that you expected no company at present. People talk of the retirement of the country: I have wished of late that it was oftener to be found in the large country-house of an English country gentleman; for I never before felt so entirely un-

fitted for society. It is so irksome to appear gay when I am sad, and it is so difficult to be at ease with others when I am not at ease with myself. The mere fact of having a secret unimparted to my mother is a constant weight upon my mind. The consciousness that I have avowed to another, that which I have withheld from her gives me a guilty feeling in her presence; and yet the recollection that I am sparing her the infliction of pain and anxiety tells me it is a duty to let her remain in ignorance of what she cannot alleviate. I long to talk with you again on this subject, and then I shall know better what you would advise me to do before we go to London, where we shall probably again meet Mr. Dacre. I am glad you told me that Mr. Maitland had met him at the play with Lady Anne. I know you will scold me for saying so, but I cannot help regarding even

this as a fresh proof of the preference he has for her society. Pray never conceal any thing from me through fear of giving me pain ; for perhaps the more strongly I can confirm the impression of his indifference towards me the better will it be for my ultimate welfare. But I will not inflict upon you any further reflections on this painful topic till we meet. Believe me always,

“ My dear Caroline, your very affectionate cousin,

“ EMILY SOMERS.

“ P. S. — Papa desires me to say, with his love, that you are not, on any account, to tempt me to stay one hour later than the time at which he has desired me to set out from Denham, as he really wishes me to return early on that day ; and he has great misgivings of my power to resist your invitations.”

The Duchess of Bolton had only just finished the perusal of this letter when the duke entered her room with others in his hand. He had received several answers to invitations he had written himself; and he now came to tell her whom they were to expect.

“By the by,” said the duke, half smiling, “here is an acceptance from a person whom you did not know that I had invited.”

“Now I am sure,” replied the duchess good humouredly, “you have been asking somebody that you know I can’t bear, and then you will expect me to be civil to him.”

“On the contrary,” said the duke, “it is a person that you cannot fail to like, but then it is thanks to Maitland that he is coming!”

“That tiresome man!” exclaimed the duchess. “Why must he try to manage every thing for every body?”

“Ah!” said the duke, laughing, “that’s just what I expected; you are hard upon poor Maitland. His love of interference is really very often useful. He reminded me the other day that we had never invited Sir Edward Bradford; and thanks to his useful hint, I have asked him to come next week, when he would meet Dacre and some more of our Hatton party.”

The duchess did not know that Dacre had been invited, and expressed surprise and pleasure at the announcement.

The duke had imagined she had been aware of his intention, and put into her hand Dacre’s note. It said very little: it was only an acceptance of the invitation to Denham, and a request to be allowed to leave it uncertain for some few days whether he came on the Friday or the Saturday.

“I hope it will be Friday,” said the duchess; and a little smile lurked at the corner of her mouth as she returned the note.

“You look as if you had some hidden meaning in that wish.”

“Perhaps I have,” rejoined the duchess, “but it is my turn now you know to be mysterious; and you have no chance of knowing at present, why I wish for his arrival on Friday, in preference to Saturday. Perhaps it is my impatience to see him again — perhaps it is my anxiety to get his visit over.”

“Perhaps,” said the duke, “it is neither one nor the other; and I am beginning to grow curious.”

“Your patience must hold out a little longer,” replied the duchess. “Till his visit is over, there is no hope for you.”

“Remember, then, Caroline, if I am patient

till then, that I shall consider you bound to tell me the moment he is gone."

"I will not promise," said the duchess; "but your own discernment may perhaps assist you to discover my secret before then."

It was always a difficult task to the duchess to conceal any thing from her husband; but she had felt herself in duty bound to her cousin to keep for a while, even from him, all knowledge of the conversation that had passed between them on the subject of Dacre. The duke had never detected the existence of any feeling of peculiar interest towards each other in the parties concerned; and the duchess had always therefore avoided putting her discretion to the proof, by abstaining from even such allusions as had been merely the result of her own observation. This announcement of Dacre's possible arrival at a time which might afford so

speedy an opportunity of his again meeting Emily made her feel that her prudence was already rewarded. Knowing all she did, she could hardly have proposed such a measure. She would hardly have felt it right. She would have feared to increase the embarrassment that Emily must experience in meeting him again in her presence, for the first time, since she had made her confession of attachment. But now the very thing she had wished seemed likely to occur, without any compromise of scruples on her part; and she was sanguine in her expectations of good results from a meeting, however short, between Dacre and Emily.

Friday came. The duke had written, by the desire of the duchess, to beg that Mr. Dacre would come on which-ever day best suited his convenience, at the same time expressing a hope that it might be the earliest; for she wisely

thought that by releasing him from the obligation of fixing beforehand the time, it gave a better chance of his arriving ere Emily's departure. The duchess had told Emily on the Thursday that there was a possibility of Dacre's arrival on the following day; and from that moment all peace within had flown, though she assured the duchess of her conviction that he would not come till too late, with all the calmness she would fain have felt. Her heart was in one continued flutter of expectation, joy, hope, and fear.

Who does not know the painful excitement that attends the anticipation of any coming good or ill? Who has not experienced the feeling of abstraction — the icy hand — the flushed cheek — the ready start — and those fancied sounds that ever wait upon the ear of expectation? Who has not felt, as the moment of

crisis approaches, that sickening sinking of the heart — its hurried beat — and the determined throb that vibrates strong through every pulse? and then the delusive reprieve of another delay — and again the same circle of feelings is run. To none who have ever loved, or hoped, or feared, can these sensations be unknown; and let not those who have dared avow the lengthened pains of anxious watching think lightly of the suspense endured by one, who, like Emily, was bound by every feeling of delicacy and prudence to conceal scrupulously from observation the varied emotions of her mind.

Emily talked and listened, and played and sang, and performed with exemplary patience the social tasks that were imposed upon her. But throughout all Thursday it seemed as if every meal was delayed in coming, and prolonged in duration. The ride had been long — the walk

fatiguing — every story was lengthy and pointless — and the evening endless. Three times had she put up her work, convinced that the hour of rest was at hand; and when at last she had hurried to her room, and hastily prepared for bed, time still seemed to drag its weary way with slow and laggard steps. She dreamt all night that she had slept too long; and starting up with this impression still on her mind, found, to her disappointment, that not quite an hour had elapsed since the same dream had awakened her before. The impression of haste was not gone the next morning, and she hurried her toilette, scarcely conscious that she did so, till the matter-of-fact assurance from her maid, “that there was no need of hurry, as her ladyship was earlier than usual,” reminded her how little the dreaded, wished-for meeting would be accelerated by any means in her power. With

this reflection she endeavoured to tutor herself the rest of the morning, and she played with the children, and resolutely abstained from looking at her watch more than every half hour.

Luncheon over, the duchess proposed a walk. Lady Emily, Sir Edward Bradford, and some country neighbours were of the party; and as they sallied forth from the house, Emily could not refrain from just reckoning how many hours must elapse before the time when all doubt would be over of the possibility of Dacre's arrival on that day. The duchess was a florist, and so were two of the other ladies, and they lingered long in the flower-garden. There were new annuals to be discussed, and fine shrubs to be admired, and a great deal of astonishment to be expended on the half-hardy plants that had lived through the winter —

though the winter was allowed to be still more wonderful, as there had been no frost.

Sir Edward disliked dawdling; and turning to Lady Emily remarked, that he wished the duchess would remember that guests were always tender plants, and would be chilled to death by standing out in such a cold damp day. Emily also longed to be in motion; for she, truly, felt the sooner the walk was begun, the sooner it would be over; and she playfully suggested to her cousin the inexpediency of their all catching cold in honour of the garden.

The duchess agreed, and the walk was begun. They had not, however, proceeded far, when the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. The duchess turned, and on seeing the servant emerge from the walk, gave the natural exclamation of, "How provoking! some tiresome morning visiter!" In another moment,

the sound of the visiter's tread might be heard in echo to that of the footman.

Emily's heart beat quick — she dared not look up — her whole attention seemed absorbed in the pleasing occupation of spoiling the walk with the ferrule of a parasol; and she tried to compose herself. She told herself, “*It cannot be he,*” and waited in breathless anxiety to hear the name she was so sure would not interest her. The sound that greeted her ear was an exclamation from the duchess. Dacre's name was pronounced. It was Dacre's voice that returned the salutation. The blood rushed to her face, and for an instant she felt she could not speak. But the effort must be made. None but Sir Edward had seen that blush. Her veil had fallen when she spoke to Dacre, and he knew not how the proffered hand trembled that was given with such seeming indifference.

The walk was continued ; Dacre walked for a while by the side of the duchess, and he was surprised at the kindness of her manner. He had not expected from her more than the bare civility of mere good breeding ; and this unexpected cordiality gave him spirits to resist the depressing embarrassment occasioned by Lady Emily's presence.

In time the duchess contrived to approach Emily near enough to address her without much effort. " Emily !" said she, raising her voice a little. Lady Emily turned. The duchess made her a sign to come to her ; and the sign was obeyed. " Emily, don't you remember, dear, that pretty, pleasing looking girl, Miss Bingley, whom we admired at the Hatton ball ?" said she, and she passed her arm through Lady Emily's as she spoke.

Lady Emily remembered Miss Bingley perfectly.

“ Had you heard of her marriage with Captain Molesworth ? ” asked the duchess.

Lady Emily had not.

Dacre said it had only recently been declared, but that it was to take place immediately.

“ Mr. Dacre tells me that Captain Molesworth is a charming person, and a great friend of his,” observed the duchess.

“ Oh yes ! ” replied Emily, turning towards him, “ that I know he is, for I have so often heard you speak of Captain Molesworth, that I feel as if I were acquainted with him.”

Emily blushed as she spoke.

Dacre observed that she did so, and there was something in this allusion to past times and conversations, which, common-place as it was, gave him pleasure.

The duchess continued the topic ; for though it could not be supposed that the union of two people with whom she was unacquainted could be very interesting to her, she perceived that it was a subject on which Dacre conversed with ease and interest ; and Lady Emily was soon lured into taking her part in the conversation. This was just what the duchess had wished ; and having thus assisted them to break down the barriers of embarrassment and pique, she disengaged herself from Lady Emily's arm, and, pointing out to her fellow-florists some new wonder in some new plant, left Dacre and Emily in the undisturbed enjoyment of a short *tête-à-tête*.

CHAP. VII.

When I consider life 't is all a cheat ;
 Yet, fool'd with hope, men favour the deceit ;
 Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay —
 To-morrow's falser than the former day ;
 Lies worse, and, while it says we shall be blest
 With some new joys, cuts off what we possess.

•
 DRYDEN.

It certainly is a most fortunate circumstance that watches and clocks are never in love ; for without their interference poor time would, indeed, be most sadly belied. Every one takes his own fanciful view of the rate that he flies. Suspense makes a moment an age ; and joy turns a day to an hour. Ennui lives a life in every week ; and whilst idleness chides the slow flight of his foe, industry murmurs that he escapes her so swiftly. Still, old time goes on

his own unwearied and unvaried pace, and various are the contrivances which, like faithful emissaries, mark that he does so, and love — even love — must submit to the cold decision of a well-regulated clock. Lovers may storm at delays that barely exist, and protest that hours gone by are yet to come ; but the dull, insensible minister of time looks on unmoved by his passion : he strikes with stern justice — points at truth with his hand, and man must bow to the power of calculation he has lost. Had it not been for the assistance of the loud stable clock, the house-clocks, the dressing bell, and dinner bell, Emily would never have believed that Friday afternoon had comprised the same number of hours as that of Thursday. She had seen Dacre. She had followed her cousin's advice. She had talked to him — and she had talked to him without either that forced indif-

ference, or that constraint by which she had sometimes felt herself obliged to disguise her real feelings at Hatton; and though nothing worth recording had passed between them,—nothing even that she could repeat to the duchess,—yet to the quickened perceptions of love there was an expression in his countenance — a tone in his voice — an emphasis on his words — that whispered an assurance she had not yet been supplanted in his affections.

Dinner was announced; and Dacre, punctiliously scrupulous of ever assuming the precedence his position forbad, fell back to the rear, as the company paired off in procession to dinner. Sir Edward Bradford had preceded him — a place was left vacant next to Lady Emily: Sir Edward must have seen that it was so — and Dacre felt sure he would occupy it — but he passed on to another — and Dacre for-

gave him half his sins, as he found himself in possession of the chair by her side. But Sir Edward's conduct perplexed him: it was unlike what he had seen before; and as knowledge could supply no facts to account for this change, imagination soon furnished him with reasons that he would gladly not have thought of. The idea that this avoidance might be only the result of some explanation — some mutual agreement to disguise in company the feelings they had acknowledged to each other, crossed his mind; and he hastily concluded he was indebted for her kindness of manner in their walk to her compassionate sympathy for the blow she was about to inflict. Feelings like these could not fail to damp the pleasure of his good fortune in sitting next to Lady Emily; and for more than half the dinner he remained almost silent, and then when conversation did again

begin, and, to others, might seem to flow smoothly and softly along, it was not quite what Lady Emily had expected; and she re-entered the drawing-room with hopes less vivid, and spirits less excited, than she could have anticipated, when her heart beat so quick with delight, as she saw him take his place by her side.

She experienced something of that undefinable disappointment, which makes us dissatisfied with the progress of events, even though we had not positively expected any other to happen. She wondered to herself in one minute, whether, after all, his affection was so necessary to her happiness; and in the next, whether it were possible that she should ever, lastingly, engage the affections of one, whom she considered so superior to herself. Love teaches humility, and never do the attractions of others rise to our view in such formidable array; and never does

the consciousness of our own deficiencies tend to lower us so effectually as in the presence of the object of our devoted love.

The discussion that had arisen on political events in the dining-room had not terminated when the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room; and as they ranged themselves in front of the fire, the duke addressed himself to Sir Edward, as if in continuance of some previous conversation. “Bradford,” said he, “I suppose if this dissolution does take place, you will stand for some borough?”

Sir Edward replied in the negative.

“Nothing surprises me so much as your neither being nor intending to be in parliament,” observed the duke; “you always take so much interest in politics, you really ought to take some part in them. It disappoints the expectations of your friends to hear you talk so

well in private, and yet never come forward in public life."

Sir Edward bowed and smiled in acknowledgment of the compliment ; and then declared, laughingly, that he abstained from appearing in any new character, out of consideration to his friends. " Besides," said he, " it is so much pleasanter to be told how well one could do, if one would, than to hear how much better one would do, if one could, that I cannot forego the enjoyment of friendly expectations I never should realise."

The duke laughed, but still urged the point of his playing some more useful part than that of mere connoisseur in the affairs of the nation ; and said something, half joking, half serious, in praise of well-directed ambition. But Sir Edward maintained, he should never be as powerful in action as in repose ; and that ambition could

expect no more than to be crowned with the laurels she wrested from other men's brows. "Depend upon it," said he, "that the man who neither disappoints nor fulfils his promise is sure to be exalted above his fellows. His success is all in the imagination; and *that* knows no bounds. We all know the brilliant speech of Mr. A——, the wonderful reply of Mr. B——; but 'nobody knows,' says their envious listener, 'how much better Sir Edward and Sir Charles could have spoken than either, if they would but have given themselves the trouble.'"

Sir Edward was not to be convinced; and then followed some good-humoured attack and defence of his principles. There was, however, some truth in what Sir Edward had said of himself. He had, in fact, neither the inclination nor the power to lead other men's minds; and he was too just to gain strength from the spirit

of party. His failings were indolence and vanity ; and as in conversation he was sometimes brilliant, and always agreeable, he found society yielded the quickest return for the trouble expended ; and he soon became indisposed to fit himself for a wider field of action, or to risk the reputation for talent he had so easily won.

Dacre had seated himself by Lady Emily ; and he had watched her, with great anxiety, during this discussion with Sir Edward ; but not even could his jealous eye detect, in her manner or countenance, any trace of that particular interest he supposed her to feel in the opinions of Sir Edward. “ Perhaps,” thought he, “ this is only the calmness of unqualified assent to all he thinks and says.”

Sir Edward had moved out of hearing distance ; and Dacre, turning to Lady Emily,

remarked, "that, of course, Sir Edward would have the support of the ladies in this avowed preference for social pleasure over public usefulness."

"I suppose," said she, smiling, "in common gratitude, we ought to uphold the good taste of preferring the world in which we move to any from which we are excluded; and we ought to like the fine speeches made to ourselves much better than those that are made in parliament: and yet I don't believe we do. We are so idle ourselves, that I think we therefore admire industry the more in others."

"Had you represented this fact to Sir Edward," replied Dacre, "I suspect, it would have weighed more with him than any thing that has been said to-night."

"Oh, no," replied Emily: "my powers of conversion are not very great; and Sir Edward

assured me, the other day, that, as the great drama of life would never go on if all were actors, and no audience, he served his country best by taking a front-place to look on at other men's works. In short," continued she, "you know, Sir Edward is very amusing, and makes one laugh, and every body must like him; for even if they think him wrong on this one point, there is nobody more generally right-minded than he is."

This was certainly praise of Sir Edward; but the praise was given in that open unhesitating manner to which love is a stranger; and the last fancy fabric which jealousy had built was at once swept away. The conversation was continued; and they talked of the advantages of occupation.

"I am persuaded," observed Dacre, "that the pursuit of some intellectual object is the only

thing to preserve us from that hopeless union of age and folly at which the mere man of sports and pleasure is sure to arrive. We cannot help growing old," continued he ; " but it saves us from feeling old : we may grow hackneyed in the idle ways of the world, but we are always young in knowledge."

Lady Emily warmly assented.

" I used sometimes," said he, " to wonder whether all amusing occupations, not vicious in themselves, might not be equally conducive to happiness ; but it cannot be. Every thing in life is progressive ; nothing stands still. The mind that makes no progress is at war with nature ; and ennui, the demon of idleness, is sure to inflict the punishment deserved."

" Yes," replied Lady Emily ; " indeed, even in my short experience, I have often observed how heavily it afflicts all who are under its

influence. Ennui seems a sort of spell, which casts a death-shade upon the very pleasures on which that idleness depends."

"And is it not extraordinary," said Dacre, "to see people voluntarily devote their time to pursuits which lead to no improvement — then persevere, in spite of age, and of every change that should make them conscious of their sameness and insipidity, and yet almost glory in declaring they afford them no amusement? yet such is the case of the devotee of fashion and of pleasure."

"You cannot think," replied Lady Emily, "how often it has struck me with surprise to see the struggle that some people make to prolong their youth, by a forced continuance of its follies; and really," added she, laughing, "when one sees a man who has for years and years been frequenting the same balls, paying

the same compliments, making the same small talk, dancing with every new girl, and making friends with every new youth on purpose to keep himself young, it does make one think whether playing at the games of the nursery might not succeed in prolonging one's childhood."

Dacre smiled. "I hate to see that anomaly, an old butterfly," said he; "but they will always be found where society has been not the recreation but the occupation of life."

"I suspect from your way of speaking," said Lady Emily, "that you have been lately forming plans of useful industry?"

"Whether I shall ever succeed in being useful, is, I fear, very doubtful," replied Dacre, "but I have determined not to be idle. A lonely man, like me, cannot afford to despise himself; but," added he, in a tone which betrayed some emotion, "I must go abroad first.

I am fit for nothing now. When I return, I must hope to be in a better frame of mind for business or application than at present."

Lady Emily's colour went and came, and for a minute she could not speak. That short sentence, "I must go abroad," had dealt a death-blow to her growing confidence in his attachment.

Dacre perceived her embarrassment, and as he falsely attributed it to the fear of an explanation she wished to avoid, his pride took alarm, and he made the effort to talk calmly of his intended journey, and said his absence would be long.

Lady Emily, scarcely knowing what to say, asked if he meant to go to Italy.

"No," replied Dacre, "I mean to avoid every place which I have already visited. The East is my object. There are no associations

there with the living. One may learn much from the remains of past ages, or speculate on the future with advantage—but I must wish to forget my own generation.”

Lady Emily's emotion almost choked her utterance, but she felt that delicacy demanded self-control, and she asked in a firm, but subdued tone, if he meant to leave England soon.

“As soon as it is possible,” he replied: “there is nothing so foolish,” added he in a hurried tone, “as to delay, when one's mind is made up; it is mere weakness,” murmured he to himself.

They both paused. Lady Emily bent over her work, as if she was going to resume the task of spoiling her embroidery.

This movement was observed by one of the ladies of the party, and in an audible voice,

she asked the duchess, if they might not hope for some music this evening. "I would not say a word," added she, "when Lady Emily was engaged in conversation, but I trust music may have the preference over work."

The duchess was not a little provoked at having the *tête-à-tête* between Dacre and Emily thus assailed; but to each of them it was at that moment a relief, for neither dared give expression to their thoughts, and Lady Emily rose with the most obliging alacrity to comply with the request.

Dacre soon followed to the piano-forte.

Lady Emily was at a loss to know on what song to fix; and, turning to Dacre, she asked him if he would name any thing for her to sing. There was an expression of melancholy and tenderness in his countenance, as he replied, that nearly overcame poor Emily, and she almost

repented her courage in having asked him the question.

Dacre turned over the leaves of her book, in quest of the song he had most wished to hear. It was that same English ballad she had sung at Hatton. That song, the words of which each had felt but too strongly applicable to the feelings they endured. But the pride that had then sustained Lady Emily through the task was now gone. She then thought herself the victim of a fickle and inconstant heart. She was now convinced that she was still the object of his affections. But, alas ! that conviction had been accompanied by the intelligence of his approaching absence. She thought some unknown obstacle must exist to the avowal of his attachment, and that he therefore meant to seek in change of scene the oblivion of her, to whom he would not, or could not, unite his fate.

“ Will you let me hear that, once more ?” said Dacre, pointing to the song.

Emily knew she could not command herself sufficiently, and turning hastily over the leaf, she replied, “ No, not that, pray find some other.”

“ You told me I might choose,” said Dacre ; “ why will you not indulge me by singing that ?”

Emily blushed deeply — she scarcely knew what she said. “ I never can sing *that* when I am nervous — it is so high.”

Dacre knew it was particularly low, and he saw that Lady Emily had some other reason for wishing not to sing it.

“ Will you let me hear it to-morrow ?” said he ; “ I should be sorry never to hear that again ?”

“ I go home to-morrow,” replied Lady Emily,

“but you shall hear it, if you please, in London.”

“But we may not meet in London,” said Dacre, looking at her earnestly.

“Oh yes,” replied Emily, “we shall be in town very soon, and you will not be gone so very soon?” said she enquiringly, her face glowing with the agitation of this allusion to his departure.

“Not, if I may hear *that* first,” rejoined Dacre.

Lady Emily begged him to join her in a little national air, to which she had, by accident, turned in her book, and luckily, for their musical reputation, there was nobody, but the duchess, in the room, who was sufficiently versed in the art, to discover how very indifferently it was performed.

It was getting late; the evening was over,

and Emily found herself again in her room, detailing to the duchess all that had passed.

“My dear Emily,” said the duchess, in answer to her confident assertion that nothing would prevent Dacre from going abroad, “if there really exists any mysterious reason that prevents Mr. Dacre from openly declaring his feelings towards you, it certainly is best he should at once absent himself—but I do not yet believe that such is the case. You will own, I have been right in my assurance that Lady Anne Preston had not superseded you in his affections; and I hope I may prove right again—though, of course, I cannot speak with equal confidence on that subject.”

“No, no; it would be too much happiness,” replied Emily, as the tears stole down her cheeks, “if all were to go smoothly; but, indeed, Caroline, I am happier now than when I was at

Hatton. I hope it is not very selfish—not very wrong—but to feel sure of his attachment is a comfort, even though it may never lead to our union. I do not feel so humbled. I know I could bear any thing for his sake, supported by his affection; but to be treated with the indifference he had taught me not to feel, seemed so cruel.”

The duchess kissed her, and hoped her trials might soon end. She then strongly recommended that Emily should now make Lady Kendal acquainted with every circumstance connected with her feelings towards Dacre. “You will soon meet Mr. Dacre in London, and it is not only right,” said she, “that your mother should be acquainted with all that has passed on this subject; but unless you remove her impression of his coldness and inconstancy, he will feel

himself tacitly rejected by her manner towards him."

Emily had really suffered too much from the practice of any concealment from her mother, not to readily promise to confess all to her, so soon as she returned home.

Breakfast was scarcely concluded the following morning, ere the carriage was announced. Lady Emily had come down prepared for her departure, and she now only waited to take leave of the party, till the duchess had finished a note to Lady Kendal, of which she was to be the bearer.

"Emily," said the duchess, looking up from her writing, "are you sure you have collected all your property? Have you got your work-box and your music book?"

"No:" the music book had been forgotten; and Dacre's offer to search for it, and give it to

the servant, was accepted. As he returned to the room, Emily was standing in the window, watching the clouds which threatened her with rain.

“I have given the music,” said he, approaching her; “but if the book could have found a voice, I should have been tempted to keep it. I should then, you know,” continued he, speaking still lower, “have heard the song you would not sing last night.”

“You forget,” replied Lady Emily, with a faint attempt to smile, “that I have promised you shall hear it when next we meet.”

“No,” replied Dacre: “I have not forgotten — you must know that I was not likely to forget *that*; but you did not tell me where I might be allowed to have the opportunity of so doing.”

“That must rest with you,” rejoined Emily:

“wherever you please — at home, or at Bolton House; but here comes the servant,” said she, “to announce the carriage again, and I must not delay.”

“You will not forget your promise,” said he, in a tone that implied a far deeper interest than any that a mere song could have produced.

“Why should you suspect it?” replied Lady Emily, with a look which showed that she attached a more than common meaning to her words.

“I have always,” said he, “too much reason to expect what I dread; and I feared London might change your intentions.”

“I am never capricious,” rejoined Lady Emily, and she put out her hand to bid him good bye. He pressed it warmly; and though her countenance bore the evidence of confusion, and even agitation, there was no trace of displeasure to

be seen in her face, as she turned from the window to depart. She embraced her cousin, let her veil fall over her face, as she made her adieu to the rest of the party, and then, accepting the duke's arm, who led her to the door, she threw herself back in the corner of the carriage, and, from Denham to her home, it may be fairly supposed, that not even Dacre himself could have murmured at the intrusion of a single thought in her mind unconnected with himself.

CHAP. VIII.

But happy they, the happiest of their kind,
 Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate
 Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend.
 'T is not the coarser tie of human laws,
 Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,
 That binds their peace ; but harmony itself,
 Attuning all their feelings into love. THOMSON.

DACRE returned to London—and though he hardly yet dared allow himself to be sanguine, yet still, during this last meeting with Emily, he had gathered hope—a hope dearer to his heart than all but its realisation. And to what did this hope owe its birth? To a slight emphasis on a single letter. She had said, “*I am never capricious.*” Did she mean, then, to accuse him of caprice? Was it possible she could

have so greatly misconstrued his feelings towards her? Could she have so mistaken the motives which had withheld him from giving utterance to the sentiments, of which he knew every look and action must have borne testimony? Perhaps it was so: and he fondly clung to this explanation of her coldness—fondly hoped that on him lay the blame of all the misery he had endured.

On his arrival in London, he there found awaiting his return a summons to Thornbury Park. The day was fixed for the marriage of Harry Molesworth and Mary Bingley, and it was deemed by all parties indispensable that he should be present at the ceremony. It was fortunate for Dacre that his visit to Denham had somewhat fortified his mind for the contemplation of such a scene, as he was now called upon to witness. He could better enjoy the sight of

the happiness he had so earnestly desired for his friend, when the contrast with his own blank prospects was less hopelessly marked.

Marriage is to a woman at once the happiest and the saddest event of her life : it is the promise of future bliss, raised on the death of all present enjoyment. She quits her home — her parents — her companions — her occupations — her amusements — every thing on which she has hitherto depended for comfort — for affection — for kindness — for pleasure. The parents by whose advice she has been guided — the sister to whom she has dared impart the every embryo thought and feeling — the brother who has played with her, by turns the counsellor and the counselled — and the younger children, to whom she has hitherto been the mother and the playmate — all are to be forsaken at one fell stroke : every former tie is loosened — the spring of

every hope and action is to be changed; and yet she flies with joy into the untrodden path before her: buoyed up by the confidence of requited love, she bids a fond and grateful adieu to the life that is past, and turns with excited hopes and joyous anticipation of the happiness to come. Then woe to the man who can blight such fair hopes — who can treacherously lure such a heart from its peaceful enjoyment, and the watchful protection of home—who can, coward-like, break the illusions that have won her, and destroy the confidence which love had inspired. Woe to him who has too early withdrawn the tender plant from the props and stays of moral discipline in which she has been nurtured, and yet made no effort to supply their place; for on him be the responsibility of her errors—on him who has first taught her, by his example, to grow careless of her duty, and then exposed her with a weak-

ened spirit, and unsatisfied heart, to the rude storms, and the wily temptations of a sinful world.

Never was there a bride more exempt from the prospect of such dangers than Mary Bingley. She was about to be united to the object of her purest, youngest love. He, whom she had loved in the artless simplicity of childhood, was he to whom she would now soon stand pledged at the altar with the deep devotion of a wife. Time, and experience in the dispositions and tastes of each other, had strengthened their mutual affection, till it seemed as if their attachment had wound itself into a part of their nature; and whilst the triumphant happiness of successful love played over every feature of the bridegroom's face, he was not the less seriously impressed with that sacred responsibility incurred by the husband—the welfare of a loving and dependent being.

The party assembled at Thornbury Park for the celebration of the marriage was not large, and, with the exception of Dacre, was composed entirely of the members of the family. Mr. Wakefield had been invited, but he had declined the invitation, on the plea of ill health. He had accompanied his excuses to Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth with a very kind letter to Mary Bingley. It was in the same female hand as that in which his notes to Dacre in London had been written, and which he had concluded to be Mrs. Shepherd's. It contained the expression of warm and affectionate wishes for his niece's happiness, and the hope of seeing her and her husband whenever they came to town; and it concluded by begging her acceptance of a handsome present, as a small token of the good will of her affectionate uncle. Nothing could be more amiable, thought both Mary and Harry; and

the sight of so many kind words in Mrs. Shepherd's handwriting convinced them more than ever of the goodness of her disposition.

The letter from Mr. Wakefield to Mr. Molesworth was written in the tremulous hand of the infirm old man himself; and Mr. Molesworth found less cause to be satisfied with its contents than had the lovers in that addressed to Mary. Mr. Wakefield did not wish to shrink from the kind promises of assistance he had made in favour of his niece; but he wished to make a change in the mode of conferring his gift. He had, at first, declared his intention of giving her the sum which would render interest sufficient to complete the income, without which Mr. Molesworth had determined to withhold his consent to the marriage of his son: but Mr. Wakefield now informed Mr. Molesworth, that one quarter only of that money would be paid

on their marriage; that he should himself pay the interest of the remainder during his lifetime; and that, on his death, they would come into possession of the whole of the promised sum: moreover, he added, that, lest any uneasiness respecting this arrangement should be felt by the parties concerned, he could give them the satisfaction of knowing that he intended immediately to add this bequest to his will.

It was impossible for Mr. Molesworth to offer any objection to this arrangement. The objections he felt were not such as it was possible to state, without giving just cause of offence; but he sincerely regretted that such a change should have been proposed. He imparted his feelings on the subject to Dacre; and Dacre, alone, sympathised with him in the regret. Harry and Mary were not disposed to give much at-

tention to any arrangement that did not interfere with their marriage. John Molesworth knew that he should have, if required, both the power and the will to assist his brother, whenever his father could no longer do so ; and Mrs. Molesworth only thought it a pity that Mr. Molesworth should get into one of his tiresome ways about nothing, when there were so many things of consequence to be settled for poor dear Mary, and for poor dear Harry, who could not now be persuaded to think of any thing for themselves. Dacre, however, fully entered into Mr. Molesworth's feelings: not that he had any reason to doubt the kind and honourable intentions of Mr. Wakefield; but his mind misgave him when he thought of Mrs. Shepherd. In spite of all appearances of kindness on her part, he had never overcome certain doubts of her sincerity and truth; and he related to Mr.

Molesworth, in support of his suspicions, the circumstance of the miniature. It was agreed by Mr. Molesworth and Dacre, that it would be but right, as well as prudent, that the young couple should make a point of going soon to London, in order to see Mr. Wakefield; and that they should keep up, by constant intercourse, the friendly feelings he had evinced towards Mary on the present occasion; and to that proposition they both yielded a ready consent.

The wedding day was come, and every preparation that could be devised had been made for the occasion. The *trousseau* was completed. Mrs. Molesworth's wedding gift of house-linen, for the little cottage that would henceforward be their home, was in readiness. The gifts of loving friends had been admired — the offerings of dependants had been tendered, and accepted

with gratitude — the cake was ready sliced for distribution — the maid-servants now appear in their newest attire — poor Dash comes in, waddling with the huge white riband bow with which John has adorned him — and the village chimes are distinctly heard pealing their cheerful invitation to come to the altar.

The party is assembled in the library. Mrs. Plumer had been wondering this half hour how Mary will look. The bridesmaids assure her the dress is becoming. The bridegroom looks wistfully at the door to catch the first glimpse of her appearance. The carriages are announced, and Mary, the gentle blushing bride, now enters the room, accompanied by Mr. Molesworth. With a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye, she accepted Harry's arm, to lead her towards the little group that awaited her arrival to proceed to the church. Princes might have envied

them the majesty of their possessions. They each possessed the heart they had coveted ; and their union, untainted by one thought on the pomp and circumstance of life, was now to be solemnised by a sacred rite, in presence of approving friends. Tears were shed — and shed by her, who thought herself most blessed : but they were the tears of hope, affection, piety, and gratitude ; and as she threw herself into the arms of Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth, she felt the added happiness of being now, alike in name and feeling, a daughter to those who had cherished her like parents.

To Dacre it was a moving scene : it was the sight of all that happiness of domestic love — the display of all those ties of family union — which fate had denied to him. He had witnessed, as a spectator, the enjoyment of blessings he had sighed for, and yet never experienced. He

had stood by the altar, and seen the hand given where the heart was fixed; he had listened to the words which had bound them for life; he had watched with friendly interest the bending figure of the youthful bride, who had just breathed holy vows,—her face concealed, and yet her love confessed,—and he had thought on Emily. He had, in fancy, arrayed her in that bridal robe: his imagination painted her in place of her who stood before him;—and then, for a moment, he tried to think of her as the bride of another;—but hope chased the thought, too painful for endurance, and quickly summoned to his mind the brightest vision she could raise. He gazed on the couple, now kneeling before him, and fancied he saw but the reflection in a glass of himself and Lady Emily. It was the delusion of an instant; and he awoke from his day-dream to the consciousness of

painful doubt and fear. But it was not despair. No — the visit to Denham had made him feel that he need not yet despair. He thought of the look with which she bid him good bye ! He thought of those words : “ *I* am never capricious : ” and he fondly hoped that when they met again it would be in the kindness with which they had parted.

“ Dacre,” said Harry Molesworth, approaching him, when the ceremony was concluded, “ You are looking more than usually grave ; and I cannot doubt the subject of your thoughts : I felt I owed so much to your successful intervention, that I wished you to witness the happiness you had promoted ; but, perhaps, it has been selfish in me to ask your attendance.”

Dacre shook him by the hand : “ No — no,” replied he, “ you have not been selfish in giving me pleasure ; and though I will not deny that

all I have just witnessed may have heightened my wish to follow your example, it has, I assure you, afforded me also a ground of lasting comfort. I know not what fate may attend the success of my wishes for myself, but I have this day witnessed the fulfilment of those that I most warmly entertained for you."

Harry felt deeply his kindness, and, as he thanked him for its expression, added, in a more cheerful tone, "All will go well—depend upon it, Dacre; your fate is in your own hands: it must be so:"—and the warm-hearted happy bridegroom told himself it was impossible that such a friend could love in vain, or that such misery as unrequited attachment could exist in life.

CHAP. IX.

L'humilité n'est souvent qu'une feinte soumission dont on se sert pour soumettre les autres : c'est un artifice de l'orgueil qui s'abaisse pour s'élever ; et, bien qu'il se transforme en mille manières, il n'est jamais mieux déguisé, et plus capable de tromper, que lorsqu'il se cache sous la figure de l'humilité.

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

DACRE had promised Mr. Molesworth to call upon Mr. Wakefield on his return to town, in order to give him some account of the marriage, to which he had been so kindly instrumental ; and, remembering the manner in which he had been denied admittance when last he visited Mr. Wakefield, he took the precaution of writing this time to ask at what hour he should find him at home.

The answer was, as usual, in the handwriting of Mrs. Shepherd. The note was civil, and

courteously accepted his offer of a visit, and the hour was named.

Dacre was punctual to the time ; but on enquiring at the door if Mr. Wakefield was at home, he was told, “ Master is just gone out, sir ;” and the boy looked at him as if he could not be sure who it was, and asked his name. The name was given.

“ Mr. Dacre, sir, did you say ?”

Dacre replied in the affirmative.

“ Master was obliged to go out, sir ; but Mrs. Shepherd will be happy to see you upstairs, sir.”

Dacre accordingly mounted the stairs. His imagination was always disposed to be active whenever he thought of Mrs. Shepherd ; and now that he found himself on the point of being ushered into her presence, he could hardly check a sort of vague expectation that he was about to listen to some interesting disclosure.

Mrs. Shepherd was sitting at a table with a large work-box in front of her, and seemingly occupied in that never-ending employment, the hemming strips of muslin. She rose when Dacre entered, and courtesied, in a manner that rather brought to mind the recollection of the housekeeper, than the officer's widow. She coloured and looked a little embarrassed as she hoped, "Mr. Dacre would take a seat," and was just going to give him a chair, had not his well-bred activity rescued her from such a forgetfulness of her dignity.

Dacre "hoped that Mr. Wakefield was well ;" and was told in reply, that "Mr. Wakefield was very sorry to have been obliged to go out, but that he had an appointment which prevented his waiting any longer."

Dacre "trusted he had not kept him waiting : he thought he had been punctual ;" and, pulling

out his watch, named the hour, and feared there must be a difference in the clocks.

Mrs. Shepherd looked at hers, and it was the same ; but “ she believed that Mr. Wakefield had mentioned two o’clock, as the time at which he was sure to be within, and it was now three.”

Dacre had certainly read the figure at three ; but Mrs. Shepherd knew it was two, as she had herself written the note for Mr. Wakefield.

Dacre thought it strange he should have been so mistaken, as he had looked with attention at the hour appointed, and began to feel in his pocket for the note. Luckily the note was there ; and the figure “ three ” was displayed by Dacre to Mrs. Shepherd’s wondering eyes.

She could scarcely believe it. She was so confident she had written “ two ; ” and she was always so particular about her writing, when an appointment was in question. She was so shock-

ed — so distressed — to have given him the trouble of coming all this way for nothing ; and she was sure Mr. Wakefield would never forgive such a stupid mistake.

Dacre assured her, with becoming politeness, that the distance was a trifle, and that he should be very happy to call upon Mr. Wakefield again very soon ; and, so soon as the flurry of the mistake had subsided, she hoped Miss Bingley's wedding had gone off prosperously, and said the cake had come for Mr. Wakefield, and hoped the young people would be happy.

Dacre was sure they had every prospect of being so ; adding, “ I believe, Mrs. Shepherd, they have great reason to thank you for your kind feelings towards them.”

Mrs. Shepherd always wished well to young folks, who were attached to one another.

Dacre thought she might not, perhaps, know

that Mr. Wakefield had told him of the part she had taken in the matter, and explained to her, therefore, that he had openly attributed much of his power to serve his niece to her kind suggestions.

Mrs. Shepherd looked a little embarrassed, and then fidgetted in her chair, and replied, "Mr. Wakefield is very happy, I believe, sir, now that he has determined to do what he has. He has such a kind heart," said she, with some emotion, "that I knew he would soon forgive me the little liberty I took in offering my advice upon such a subject."

Dacre assured her that Mr. Wakefield had spoken of her interference to him only as a proof of the goodness of her heart.

"Did he indeed, sir?" said Mrs. Shepherd : "that was very good of him ! I was afraid at the time I had really offended him by speaking

my mind too freely : but," added she, with increased emotion, " Mr. Wakefield is always very kind."

Dacre saw that she slightly applied her handkerchief to her eyes, as if to brush away a tear. He expressed his regret that any thing unpleasant to her feelings should have arisen in the performance of an act of kindness.

Mrs. Shepherd did not deny that something unpleasant had arisen, but most amiably declared herself now amply repaid, and said she trusted Mr. Wakefield would never remember that what he had done for his niece had not originated in himself : she would even be obliged to Mr. Dacre never to mention to any body that she had ever taken any part whatever in the matter.

Then followed a few common-place observations on common-place topics, and Dacre felt

that his visit had been sufficiently prolonged to have afforded her the opportunity of making any disclosures, had she intended to do so. Not the faintest allusion to the miniature had been made. As Dacre rose to depart, he repeated the promise of coming soon again to see Mr. Wakefield, and Mrs. Shepherd repeated her assurance of the pleasure it would give Mr. Wakefield to see him. He quitted the house, more than ever perplexed on the character of Mrs. Shepherd, and more disposed than he had yet been to reproach himself for his injustice towards one who had proved herself so disinterestedly kind.

On the following evening he received a short note from Mr. Wakefield himself, expressing his regret at the mistake which had deprived him of the pleasure of Mr. Dacre's visit on the preceding day, apprising him of his intention

to leave London for a short time, lest he should give himself the unnecessary trouble of calling again; and hoping to have the good fortune of seeing him, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Molesworth, whenever they arrived in town. Could Mrs. Shepherd have any object in preventing Mr. Wakefield's seeing him again? or could Mr. Wakefield have any objection to seeing him? or was it all the result of mere accident? Dacre pondered over these alternatives long and often, but he could not determine on which to fix.

The commencement of the London season was now at hand, and many were the hearts which beat quick at the thoughts of its commencement. Many a hope and many a sorrow were again roused into being by its approach; and in the unromantic scenes of gay frivolity which the nineteenth century yearly exhibits in

a luxurious and civilised metropolis, every variety of human passion was again about to be endured, under the smooth varnish of social politeness.

Scenes and manners so frivolous and cold may, to some, appear at variance with the existence of such feelings; and there is always a disposition to invest the events of past ages with a character of romance, to which they were no better entitled than the present. It is true that there is nothing in the events of other days to detract from their picturesqueness. They are free from all the details which clog and disfigure those of our own. They may stand out in bold relief. Their effect upon our imagination is unimpeded by the homely realities which confuse and embarrass those we can witness in action. But though the age of chivalry is past, the age of nature and of feeling remains. Love at a

déjeuné, jealousy at Vauxhall, and despair in a well-furnished boudoir, may be less soul-stirring — less high-sounding — less heart-rending, than the vows of crested knights — the gallantry of a tournament — the breaking of lances for damsels long pledged — the conflicts of rivals in presence of thousands — the cell of the recluse, and the walls of a convent. But ere we give preference to these more ancient demonstrations of passion, let us pause for a moment, and ask whether it is to the cause or to the effect of their emotion, that we yield our ready sympathy — whether we do not estimate by a false standard the feelings and actions of our forefathers — and whether, by thus losing the proportion they truly bore to each other, we do not give more than justice awards to the past, and less than she can claim to the present. We measure the value of their deeds and sacri-

fices by the habits of civilisation, forgetting that the sensibility which enhances their worth is the growth of a greater refinement than could have co-existed with such manners and institutions; and forgetting that, little as the luxury of the day may *seem* congenial with the joys and sorrows of romance, yet in being placed above the reach of physical suffering, we are spared an interruption, rather than an aggravation, of the purer emotions of the mind. There can be no doubt but that mental cultivation, refinement of taste, and the exercise of our softer and kindlier feelings, increases the sensitiveness of our disposition, and calls forth those sympathies which bind us most closely to our fellow-creatures; and, ere we waste our regrets on the imaginary loss of such sentiments, we must remember the improbability of their decay un-

der circumstances so favourable to their culture and strength.

Lady Emily Somers had certainly been one of those in whom education and habit had alike combined to cherish every feeling which nature had implanted. Her nature was to love and to be loved, and she had been nurtured and brought up in the atmosphere of affection. Her sensibility had not been deadened by the voice of unkindness. She had known no vicissitudes of fortune — she had borne no affliction — she had suffered no illness. The occasional irritability of her father's temper had sometimes cost her a pang; but then it was her pleasing task to dispel the frown that was gathered on his brow; and, though she had watched with anxious care the bed of sickness, she never yet had failed to impart to the sufferer the cheering influence of her own sanguine disposition. She had met with

all the admiration from the world which her beauty and her charms deserved, and yet she was unconscious of distinction. She had always been lovely — she had always been engaging, and she had been admired and loved from her infancy. Admiration came not to her as the welcome tribute to an ambitious vanity, but as that to which she had been so accustomed, that it seemed a part of life itself: she thought the better of human nature for the kindness she experienced, but knew not that she created the feelings she approved. Her life had been but one bright chain of smiles, and joy, and hope — her first and only sorrow had been the fear of Dacre's inconstancy, and the having unconsciously misled her mother, respecting her feelings towards him. But now she had met him at Denham, her confidence in his love was reassured. She had since confided all to her mother, and she

had been folded to that mother's heart, and thanked for the motives that had restrained her confidence, at a time when she needed and desired the comfort of a parent's support.

Lady Kendal could not be expected to yield so ready a belief as her daughter, to the stability of Dacre's attachment; yet she was sufficiently convinced to promise not to check his attentions by any coldness of manner, should he be disposed to renew them in London: but both mother and daughter agreed that, after so much inconsistency on his part, every overt act of advance must originate with him. There would be a want of delicacy in any act, on their part, which might be construed into the desire to seek him.

Emily was now too happy to feel her wonted alarms respecting Dacre's conduct. She had suffered so much under the impression of his coldness, and the necessity of her own reserve,

that her heart was relieved by this state of comparative ease; and, with that elasticity of spirits, which a life of happiness had, as yet, preserved unimpaired, the joyousness of her nature returned, and displayed itself in the very tread of her step and the sound of her voice. But as she bounded up the stairs, chased her little brother round the garden, or hummed scraps of her songs as she danced along the passage, her mother's eye followed her with the tender solicitude of maternal anxiety,—trembling lest this security of happiness should be based on delusion—trembling lest the light-hearted innocence of the young confiding heart of her child should be blighted or deceived by the coldness or inconstancy of him who had won it.

CHAP. X.

I have follow'd thee a year at least,
And never stopp'd myself to rest,
And yet can thee o'ertake no more
Than this day can the day that went before.

COWLEY.

PARLIAMENT had met, and Lord Kendal announced to the family the day on which the removal to London was to be made. Much as Emily rejoiced in the prospect of again meeting Dacre, she was unusually nervous at quitting the country. She knew that, ere she again returned to this home, a great and important change in her own condition would have occurred. She could never again visit it with the same feelings as those with which she now left it; and the certainty of approaching change can

never be contemplated with indifference. The vagueness of the future excites apprehension even in the minds of the young and the sanguine.

Emily knew that she should probably never return to this place as her home. When next she visited it, it would probably be as a guest in the house of her father. She would have become a wife — the fond devoted wife of Francis Dacre: and would he love her in return as she hoped to be loved? — a fearful doubt, which all have felt, when fancy has dared to image what the heart desires. Emily felt the tears start in her eyes.

Another thought glanced across her mind: — Was it possible she should return to this house, as her home — unchanged in name — unchanged, perchance, in the eyes of the world? and yet, oh! how bitter, how great, how hard to bear, would be that change which should have turned

the bright stream of rapid hope that now lighted her path into the still and gloomy abyss of darkened joys. She shuddered at the very thought, and gladly took refuge from the contemplation of the future, by busying herself, with more than usual activity, in all the little arrangements necessary to be made previous to the annual removal to town.

The evening was come on which Lady Emily was to make her first appearance that season in London. An evening party was to take place at one of the houses where great assemblies make great crowds. Lady Kendal announced to her daughter her intention of accepting the invitation. Whether Lady Emily did or did not bestow a little more than ordinary time and attention on her toilette that night, must be left to the imagination of the reader; but even if Lord Kendal did send her word twice that the

horses ought not be kept waiting in the cold, surely no woman will deem it unnatural if she was longer than usual in performing the duties of her toilette.

Emily cast a furtive glance around the room at which they first entered. Groups of people were to be seen—some sitting on the ottomans, others standing in front of the sofas, others enjoying the social parties they had formed in the corners; and here and there, behind the shelter of a door, or the protection of a table, the well-known flirtation of the preceding year was renewed with fresh zest.

Dacre was not to be seen amongst these stragglers of the outskirts: and as Lady Kendal and her daughter moved along into the next apartment, Lady Emily flattered herself that, in so dense a mass, not a friend or an acquaintance could be missing. Their progress was

checked at every step by the interrogatories of the season ; and the same eternal question of, “ Have you been long in town ? ” was asked and answered again and again. The tour of the rooms was at last performed : at every change of place, and every opening in the crowd, Emily had hoped that Dacre might appear ; but she now felt sure that not a single face had escaped her observation, and that Dacre could not, therefore, be among the numerous guests of the overflowing house. She grew weary of the party, and assured her mother that she had no wish to stay longer. Lady Kendal also was fatigued ; and, placing themselves near the door in expectation of the hurried departure, to which they both looked forward with eagerness, they gladly accepted Sir Edward Bradford’s offer to ask for the carriage.

Sir Edward had been gone just long enough,

for Lady Kendal to wonder he had not returned, when the partial dispersion of the crowd left a clear vista to the further extremity of the room. When near the door, Lady Emily cast one more glance along the moving multitude; and her eye rested for an instant on the figures of two people in seeming contemplation of the wonders of a marble vase at the upper end of the room. One of the gentlemen was pointing out with much action some beauty or defect in the form of the object of their attention, while the other stood passively by. Lady Emily immediately perceived that the speaker was Mr. Preston, and she thought she could not be mistaken in the other. Nor was she: in another instant his face was turned towards her; and she saw, and was seen by, the sole object of her evening's thoughts.

Mr. Preston's little essay on vases and *tazze*

was cut short in a moment, and Dacre moved as if he would have approached her : but the crowd had again mingled, and Lady Emily lost sight of him. Again she saw his head peering between a multitude of others, and looking in the direction of the place where she and her mother were standing : she was sure he was advancing towards them ; one more effort would free him from all impediments : but no ! at that moment Mrs. Ashby and her daughters crossed his path. The hands of all three were most graciously extended ; they were all three so glad to see him ; they had been so anxious to hear from him some account of their friends at Thornbury Park ; and could he tell them when Mrs. Harry Molesworth would come to town ? Dacre could tell them nothing. The common courtesy due from a gentleman arrested his steps while they spoke, but he could hardly

command his impatience sufficiently to listen or reply to a word that delayed his approach to Lady Emily; and Mrs. Ashby thought him more strange than ever for not wishing to profit by this opportunity of talking to her eldest daughter.

“ I have just succeeded in getting your carriage,” said Sir Edward, quickly approaching Lady Kendal; “ it will be at the door in a moment; but you must make haste,” said he, offering his arm to Lady Emily, “ or it will have driven off, and the crowd of carriages to-night is quite appalling.”

Dacre succeeded in extricating himself from the unwelcome civilities of Mrs. Ashby and her daughters, but as he looked towards the place where he had seen Lady Emily standing the instant before, he saw, to his dismay, that she was gone. He advanced a step—he saw that

she had accepted Sir Edward's arm, and was walking fast away from the spot which he had been so anxiously endeavouring to reach. He was sure that both Lady Kendal and Lady Emily had seen and recognised him; and the fear that they had wished to elude his advances checked his further pursuit. Dacre returned to his home disappointed and mortified. He had gone to two assemblies that night, in the hope of meeting Lady Emily — choosing first the one at which he fancied it most likely to see her; and, not succeeding in that attempt, he had proceeded to — House. His arriving there late had prevented Lady Emily from perceiving him before; and this had, unluckily, occasioned her willingness to retire from the party so much earlier than she would have otherwise desired.

But disappointed as he was at this failure to

his hoped-for pleasure, Dacre would not, and did not now believe that Emily was either false or cold. The more he had pondered over the visit to Denham, the better he was satisfied on that point ; but he feared that Lady Kendal was less disposed than her daughter to regard him with friendly eyes, and in that fancied opposition to his hopes, he found sufficient cause of anxiety and apprehension to chase away all chance of sleep that night.

And to what feeling did this *contretems* give rise in Emily's mind ? She was conscious that, by their abrupt departure, they must have seemed to elude his presence. She was conscious that Dacre had looked upon Sir Edward as his rival ; and she knew that he must have seen her accept his arm, to lead her from the place to which Dacre was approaching. She was sure that Dacre would feel that her conduct towards him

had been repulsive and unkind, and yet she knew that she had endured still more than she had inflicted ; and that this sacrifice of both her own and his feelings had been the result of circumstances, over which she had no control. Her evening had been like one of those tormenting dreams in which the object desired is always at hand, and can never be reached ; and she went home vexed and dispirited, yet impatient for another opportunity to meet, and correct the erroneous opinions he might have formed from the events of this evening. Nothing could appear more trivial, more common-place, more unromantic, more uninteresting, than the circumstances which led to so much vexation that night. But what mattered it where the scene was laid, and how poor the dramatic effect to the spectators ? The incidents that befall us in the drama of life must owe their dignity

rather to the magnitude of their effect than to the seeming importance of their cause.

More than once in the course of that week had both Dacre and Emily hoped that the meeting would occur; but fate had willed it otherwise. Lady Kendal had allowed Emily to decide in the choice of amusements that each evening afforded; but, unfortunately, she and Dacre, by each selecting those places at which they thought it most probable the other would be found, contrived always to miss by their mutual desire to meet; and Dacre began to fear that Lady Emily must be unwell, and Emily began to fear that Dacre's resolution of going abroad might have been strengthened, if not put into execution, through the unlucky circumstances that attended their first rencontre.

In the meantime, Harry Molesworth and his bride arrived in London. Mary had never

been in town since her childhood, and in every sight and scene the charm of novelty was added to the delight of seeing all that was to be seen, under the protection of her husband. An opera box had been procured for them by Dacre ; and Mary was to go, for the first time in her life, to hear and see the wonders of that stage. The opera was *Nina* ; and Mary alternately studied the words in the book, and watched, with the eager curiosity of a novice, every change of expression, every tone in the voice of that actress and singer who has associated in our minds a feeling of reality with every character she has played. Mary sat and gazed like one enchanted : but the wanderings of the broken-hearted “ *Pazza per l'amore*,” struck no chord of sympathetic woe upon the ear of that happy bride. The tear that glistened for a moment in her eye was the passing tribute of a grateful heart,

that had escaped those sorrows with which others have been visited; and as her husband said, with playful tenderness, “ Mary, would you have lost your senses for love of me ?” she smiled, and pressed his hand, in token of that love on which she knew her very life depended.

The last scene of the opera had commenced when Dacre came into their box, and heard with pleasure of the enjoyment with which Mary and Harry had been contemplating the representation of those sorrows and trials from which they had themselves so entirely escaped.

He had not been many minutes in the box when he perceived that not very far off were seated Lady Kendal and Lady Emily. He saw they were alone: he put up his glass to gain a better view of their countenances. Their faces were turned to the stage, Lady Kendal looked grave—he thought even sad—and Emily was

in tears. It was evident that their attention was devoted to the stage, and that Lady Emily was completely overcome by the touching scene before her. Did the wearing disappointments of the preceding week suggest to her mind the appalling thought, that wretchedness like this might be in store for herself? Did the consciousness that no love had exceeded in strength the devotedness of her own, make her shudder at the consequences its blighted hopes could produce? or did she, with feelings less tangible, and fears less defined, look on with that sadness of spirits, which lends but a feeble resistance to the impression of melancholy from wherever it comes. The sight of Emily in tears, from whatever cause they flowed, was one which riveted Dacre's attention, and Harry soon perceived, by the direction of his glass, the object of attraction.

•

“Why don’t you go to them?” said Harry in a whisper, whilst Mary was engaged with the Opera book.

“I told you,” replied Dacre, “that I thought her mother avoided me the other night.” I cannot bear the idea of forcing myself upon her.

“Take my advice,” said Harry, “and go directly,—all you told me of the meeting at — House might have been accidental, and you need not stay five minutes if your presence seems unwelcome.”

It is always pleasant to be advised to do what one wishes ; and Dacre had never thought Harry more sensible than in thus sanctioning by his counsel, that which he hesitated to do. In a few minutes more Dacre found himself in Lady Kendal’s box, and had reason to be satisfied with the good sense of Harry’s advice. Lady Emily had given a little involuntary start when

he entered, and for a few minutes seemed unable to speak—but Lady Kendal not only shook him warmly by the hand, but talked to him in a manner that at once set him free from all fear lest she should regard his visit as intrusive.

Lady Emily had been introduced by Mrs. Wentworth to Miss Bingley at the Hatton ball; and whilst Dacre was standing in the Molesworth box, she had recognised in Mrs. Molesworth the person whose looks had there attracted her attention. She enquired of Dacre, if it was not Mr. Harry Molesworth from whom he was just come.

Dacre answered in the affirmative; and he then mentioned that the immediate object of their coming to London was to visit Mrs. Molesworth's uncle; that they had come for a short time, and that his friend was anxious to afford his wife what amusement he could whilst in town.

The conversation on the Molesworths continued; and Dacre, in reply to some questions, told them how retired a life Mary had hitherto led, and that though her husband had for the last two years entered a good deal into society, yet at present she was unacquainted with any one out of the immediate circle in which she had been brought up.

Lady Kendal expressed a good-natured wish to be acquainted with both husband and wife, and proposed that, as Lady Emily had been introduced to her at Hatton, she should go to call upon her.

Emily could hardly contain her gratitude to her mother for this proposition; for she knew that Dacre would feel as a kindness to himself, any civility to the wife of his friend.

Dacre was much too strongly impressed with the pleasure it must afford any one to receive a

visit from Lady Emily, not at once to accept the offer in her name, and the day after the morrow was the time which Lady Kendal named for her daughter to call upon Mrs. Harry Molesworth. The etiquette of an Opera box obliged Dacre in time to cede his place to the numerous visitors who now flocked in to disturb the pleasure of the remainder of Lady Emily's evening. But he had ascertained at what place he might meet them again, and retired that night to his home full of hopeful anticipation for the future.

CHAP. XI.

Celestial happiness, whene'er she stoops
 To visit earth, one shrine the goddess finds,
 And one alone, to make her sweet amends
 For absent heav'n — the bosom of a friend.

YOUNG.

THE next day Dacre found himself, according to an appointment, at the hotel with the Molesworths, in order that he might accompany them from thence to Mr. Wakefield's. Harry Molesworth was alone when he entered, and enquired immediately whether Dacre had repented having gone into Lady Kendal's box.

Dacre smiled, and told him all that had passed — then, after a moment's pause, he added, "I believe I begged of you some time ago, not even

to impart to Mrs. Molesworth one word on this subject."

"Nor have I," exclaimed Harry, very warmly; "it is the only subject on which I have been reserved to her; but I considered my promise to you as sacred."

"I was sure you would," rejoined Dacre, "but I now wish to free you from that promise. I am sure Mrs. Molesworth will never betray what you wish should be kept secret, and I cannot bear to be the cause of even one subject of reserve between you—so tell her all you please—you know," added he, smiling, "I feel safe in your hands, for you cannot affect to despise me for feeling towards another what you are both feeling towards each other."

Harry laughed, and would have thanked him most sincerely for this release from the difficult task of keeping any thing secret from his wife,

when the door opened, and Mary, ready equipped for the drive, made her appearance.

Dacre had imparted to the Molesworths the failure of his last attempt to see Mr. Wakefield, and the contents of the note that had followed it; and though Harry was confident that the mistake about the hour was quite accidental, and the sudden determination to leave London probably a whim, and though they were going to call at his house by appointment, Dacre was speculating during the drive upon the chances of Mr. Wakefield's being again from home. But this time there had been no misunderstanding, and when they were ushered in, Mr. Wakefield was found sitting over the fire quite alone, in the full enjoyment of the Advertisement sheet of the newspaper.

Mr. Wakefield was in manner just as usual, kissed his niece, turned her face to the light,

declared she was very like her poor mother, said it was many a year since he had seen her, that she could only just toddle about the room when last she was in that house, and remarked, “How wonderfully soon people do grow up now-a-days !” To Harry he said just what might reasonably be expected that he would say—told him he must take good care of his wife ; asked Mary if she meant to go to sea with her husband, and then reminded them, with a chuckle, “that if they did not quarrel for a whole year, they might claim a flitch of bacon !”

Dacre was beginning to wonder whether Mrs. Shepherd would make her appearance, when Mr. Wakefield, addressing himself to Mary, said, “My dear, there is a friend of mine who is very anxious to see you and Captain Molesworth. Perhaps Mr. Dacre has mentioned Mrs. Shepherd to you.”

They assented.

“ Well then, my dear, perhaps you know already the sad story of poor Mrs. Shepherd’s misfortunes. Did Mr. Dacre tell you that her real name is Harrison ? She is Lieutenant Harrison’s widow, though we call her Mrs. Shepherd, because I was used to that name, and that poor dear boy who is now no more,” said he, looking at the picture of the child, “ he always called her Shepherd, so we never changed her name ; but Mrs. Shepherd is a most respectable, praiseworthy lady, I assure you, my dear, and has gone through a great deal of trouble.”

Dacre assured Mr. Wakefield that he had already told them of the severe trials to which Mrs. Shepherd had been put, “ but,” continued he, “ I could not exactly remember in what action you said Lieutenant Harrison had been killed.”

“ That is just what *I* can never remember,” replied Mr. Wakefield; “ I know he was not killed upon the spot, but I have forgotten the details of his death—and that, you know, is just what one cannot ask her to tell one again.”

“ I should have much liked to know whether Lieutenant Harrison was ever reckoned like my father,” said Dacre, “ or whether I was deceived in thinking the miniature I saw on that table was so striking a resemblance. Do you think, sir,” continued he, addressing Mr. Wakefield in rather a supplicating tone, “ that you could procure for me once more the sight of that picture ; if on any occasion when it would not be very distressing to Mrs. Shepherd to make such a request, I should really feel most deeply obliged to you.”

“ Certainly, my dear sir, — certainly, if you wish it, there can be no objection ; but as ladies,

you know, have rather uncertain spirits, one must choose one's opportunity. Poor Mrs. Shepherd's nerves have been so sadly shaken, that, unless she begins first, I never like to allude to her husband ;—it upsets her for the day, poor thing ! but I will ask ! I will ask, Mr. Dacre, the first opportunity.”

Dacre thanked him.

Mary enquired if Mrs. Shepherd was at home, and hoped they might be introduced to her.

“ I will ring the bell, and send to her to come down,” said Mr. Wakefield. “ Do you know, Mary, my dear,” continued he, “ that she is so scrupulous, that she would not come down when you first came, because she said that near relations might like better to meet without her.”

Mary said, “ How very considerate !” though she felt it was difficult to conceive an interview

which could have been less incommoded by the presence of witnesses.

“ Ah !” said Mr. Wakefield, half tired with the effort of pulling out the handle of the bell, and leaning back on his chair—“ Ah ! she is a good soul as ever lived, and I hope, my dear, you and she will be very good friends. You will find her a little shy at first, perhaps. Do you know, Mr. Dacre, she says she feels herself now here in an awkward position, and that, unless I mention who she is beforehand, she is always afraid people may wonder what business she has here.”

Dacre felt conscious of having always been among the number of those who had so wondered, but luckily, before he was called upon to reply, the servant appeared in answer to the bell ; and as he closed the door, the garrulous old man resumed the thread of his discourse by

saying, with a laugh, in which imbecility was more prominent than merriment, "Mrs. Shepherd need not be afraid of scandal, because she takes care of me in my old age. Old age has not many privileges, but I can tell you, young gentleman, that it has one over youth. No body gossips about old men like me. I need not make a fool of myself by marrying at my time of life, to be nursed when I am ill, and amused when I am well; so we jog on very comfortably together, and very lucky it is for me that poor Mrs. Shepherd has no other home; I should not know what to do without her."

Mrs. Shepherd soon made her appearance. The introduction to Captain and Mrs. Molesworth was made; and to them, who felt that to her friendly offices they had been partly indebted for Mr. Wakefield's kindness to Mary,

it was certainly no effort to receive her with all the civility and even cordiality which a first introduction could claim. Mrs. Shepherd alluded in course of time to that mistake in her note by which Dacre had missed Mr. Wakefield, and hoped he had forgiven her stupidity.

“ Ah ! my dear sir,” said Mr. Wakefield, “ even the ladies can make mistakes sometimes, but it is not often Mrs. Shepherd is in the wrong.”

Dacre politely insinuated his conviction that she was generally right, and asked Mr. Wakefield if he had staid long out of town.

“ Not many days,” he replied, “ but it did me a deal of good.”

Dacre hoped he had not been unwell.

“ I did not feel particularly ill,” replied Mr. Wakefield, “ but Dr. Davies seemed quite uneasy at my state ; and said that nothing but change of

air would do. I can't travel far—and really I did not know what to do, or where to go, when Mrs. Shepherd was so kind as to propose my going with her to visit a first cousin of hers. It was such a God-send to me at the moment, for he has a nice house not far from town, and I was very comfortable there. Really, Mr. Dacre, houses are wonderfully comfortable now—I think even more so than in my young days.”

Mrs. Shepherd had been talking to Mary during this dialogue between Mr. Wakefield and Dacre, and was apparently quite unconscious of the eulogiums passed on the comforts of her cousin's house, and the benefit of fresh air. At last the party rose to take their leave, and as Mrs. Shepherd stood for a moment out of hearing, Dacre reminded Mr. Wakefield of his promise about the miniature.

“ I'll not forget—I'll not forget, my good

sir,—it is a very natural wish on your part.”

Dacre thanked him, and said he would call again in a short time to hear the result of his petition to Mrs. Shepherd.

It need hardly be said, that during the drive from Mr. Wakefield's to the hotel, the visit was duly discussed by the Molesworths and Dacre. Mary had been rather shocked at finding that the ravages of time were so perceptible on the mind and appearance of her uncle.

In truth, he was of an age at which many still retain both physical and intellectual powers in a far greater state of perfection—but affliction, an overwrought application to the business in which he had been for so many years engaged, ill health, and a disposition to hypochondriasis, had weakened him both in body and mind to a degree that was somewhat premature ; and though Dacre had very accurately described

Mr. Wakefield's state to Harry Molesworth on returning from his first visit, yet both he and Mary had so entirely associated him in their minds with that very sensible act which had enabled their marriage to take place, that the recollection of his approaching imbecility was forgotten, and came upon her with both surprise and regret.

Dacre was anxious to know what impression Mrs. Shepherd had made upon them. They both acknowledged that her countenance was not particularly pleasing—and they were rather struck with her manners being more underbred than they expected in an officer's widow. She was at once embarrassed and familiar; but then this might be only one of the disguises of that great disguiser of heart and manners—shyness, and Mrs. Shepherd had said many kind little things to Mary, and had contrived to let Harry

know how very much she admired his wife: and they were both quite persuaded that they should like her very much when the disadvantages of her first look and address were forgotten.

Dacre felt less certain of this, but was silent; for there was no use in endeavouring to prejudice their minds against one of whom his knowledge was so slight, and his suspicions so vague.

The next day was that on which Lady Kendal had fixed for Lady Emily's visit to Mary; and true to her intention, on that day Lady Emily came.

Mary was at home and alone when Emily entered.

Emily was not habitually shy, but she could not resist at first a greater feeling of embarrassment than she could, or rather than she would, account for—but the gentleness of Mary, and the liveliness of Emily, soon overcame their

preliminary awkwardness, and they then entered with ease and pleasure into conversation. Their most natural topic in common was Dacre. Mary spoke of the years of friendship that had subsisted between him and her husband — of the melancholy state in which their neighbour, poor Lord Hexham, had lingered for months — and of the unwearied attention which Dacre had paid to his uncle; of the affection with which he was regarded by all the people round Hexham, and of the little of either love or respect that the present owner, Mr. Crofton, had inspired in the neighbourhood, during his short residence at Hexham; and then she wound up this discourse on Mr. Dacre, by saying how grateful she must ever feel for his kindness to her and to Harry, at a time when they needed his assistance.

Though Mary was always diffident, and some-

times shy, she was never reserved; and, when once she was at her ease, there was an artless simplicity of character about her that made her open. She had no idea of concealment; and if, therefore, she had the courage to speak at all, she always said exactly what she thought. Harry was well aware of this fact, and he knew that Dacre's character could not be in safer hands than in those of the grateful Mary, who saw in him the kind mediator who had served the cause of their marriage, and the warmly attached friend of himself. When, therefore, he heard that Lady Emily was to call upon Mary, he determined to postpone the disclosure which Dacre had given him leave to make, till after the first visit was over. He knew that the consciousness of having a secret, the fancied obligation to think beforehand of what she should say, and what she ought not to say, would at

once destroy the ease with which she would otherwise speak of him, and might prevent her rendering him that ample justice which she was sure of doing when unfettered by any fancied restraint.

Harry showed his sense in this resolution — and while Mary gave utterance to her praises of Dacre, Lady Emily saw at once, by the ease of her manner, that she was so totally unconscious of the deep interest with which they were listened to, that she dared to feed the flame which Mary had so innocently lighted, by making such observations, or asking such questions, as should prolong the conversation on that subject. It was well for her that she had accidentally placed herself with her back to the light; for, as she sat and listened to the exciting theme of Dacre's praises, her heart glowed — her cheek flushed — her eye kindled — and, had Mary dis-

tinctly seen her face, that face would have proved a traitor to her secret. But who has ever loved, and not gloried in the praises of its object? who has ever admired, and not caught with delight, in the approbation of others, the echo of their own feelings? Who has not known the heartfelt satisfaction, the triumphant joy of thus arming and strengthening their passion with the encomiums of less interested observers?

Emily hung with peculiar delight on each word of Mary's that told of Dacre's merits. There were many who would have commended his attractions because he was the fashion—many might have commended his talents, his conversation, his manner, and his looks; but Mary had spoken of his heart;—she had told of his affection—his kindness—his benevolence—his friendship; and whilst Emily drank deep of the fascinating draught that nourished

her love, she blessed the hand which had so unconsciously held it to her lips.

“ Really, mama,” exclaimed Emily, when she returned from her visit, “ I do think Mrs. Harry Molesworth is the most charming person I ever knew — she is quite delightful ! I am sure you will like her so much. She has promised to call upon me, and then you must make her acquaintance.”

Lady Kendal smiled, and said she desired no better.

“ I hope she will call to-morrow or next day,” said Emily ; “ did you not think her very pretty the other night ?”

“ Not particularly,” said Lady Kendal ; “ but I could not see her very well at the Opera ?”

“ No,” replied Emily, “ that is true — she does not look brilliant, perhaps, at a distance,

but she is lovely when you talk to her — such a charming expression !”

“ I never knew you take such a fancy before to any one on so slight an acquaintance,” said Lady Kendal.

“ No ! I do not think I ever did,” replied Emily ; “ but she is so unaffected, and there is such an air of sincerity and truth in all she says, that inspires one with confidence in her disposition at once.”

Lady Kendal smiled, and said, “ Besides all her own merits, she has, you know, dear, the additional charm of being wife to the dear friend of ——.”

Emily coloured, and put her hand playfully before her mother’s mouth. “ Don’t go on,” said she — “ I know what you would say ; but I really liked Mrs. Molesworth for her own sake, quite independent of all other considerations :’

and so she thought she did — for it is no easy task to sift and arrange the various feelings that have combined to make one strong impression.

Lady Kendal kissed her, and said she had no doubt Mrs. Molesworth was “a very charming person;” whilst she ardently hoped that a few more meetings between Dacre and Emily would put an end to a suspense from which, in her anxiety for her daughter’s happiness, she suffered not a little. Dacre’s manner at the opera had given her more confidence; and like the lovers themselves, she was anxious for the next meeting, though determined, in the present state of affairs, to commit no such overt act of encouragement as that of inviting him to her house.

CHAP. XII.

Les femmes peuvent moins surmonter leur coquetterie que leurs passions.

ROCHEFOUCAULT.

“How distraït you are!” said Lady Anne Preston, as she sat by Dacre at a ball, and in vain endeavoured to rouse his languid attention to all she had to say.

“Am I?” said Dacre, with a look that verified the observation.

“I fear I have bored you past endurance,” said Lady Anne with a fascinating smile; “indeed I know I must be quite a bore with those who dispose me to talk. Now own the truth. I shall not be the least affronted. Have you not been dying to get away for the last half hour?”

“What can make you think so?” said Dacre, who, if not particularly amused that evening with Lady Anne, had had no desire to go away from the seat near the door, which afforded him a view of the coming guests.

“Why I think so,” continued Lady Anne, “is a secret I need not impart. I dare say your own conscience can tell you.”

“No, indeed,” replied Dacre; “my conscience does not charge me with having had any wish to move.”

“Then I am sure,” replied Lady Anne, gaily, “that it has been the comfort of a chair, and not the pleasure of my company, that has reconciled you to this place; for you have hardly listened to a word I have said.”

“You do me injustice, I assure you, Lady Anne,” replied Dacre; and again he stole a side-way glance at the door, to see who was coming in.

“ I hope,” said Lady Anne, after a slight pause, and in a graver tone, “ that you have given up that foolish plan of going abroad. Society cannot afford to lose you.”

“ Oh, if you think I should be missed, I had certainly better stay,” replied Dacre, with a smile that was not sentimental.

“ What a very provoking person you are !” rejoined Lady Anne ; “ you will sometimes take in earnest what I mean in joke, and take in joke what I mean in earnest. I am quite serious in saying that your loss must and would be felt ; but I verily believe,” added she, after a moment’s hesitation, “ that you are so *insouciant* yourself, that you cannot believe that every body else is not equally indifferent.”

“ Do you call me *insouciant* ?” replied Dacre. “ I have often wished to Heaven I was so, but the wish has never made me so.”

Lady Anne looked at him, for he had spoken with more warmth than she had heard him speak that evening, and she thought he would have turned his eyes on her, when he thus denied a want of feeling; but no—he looked on the ground as he spoke, and when he raised his head, his eyes again wandered to the door. Lady Anne was piqued; and another short silence ensued.

“I see the Ashbys are here to-night, standing behind Lady Whitby like her ladies in waiting,” observed Lady Anne, as she put up her glass to her eye.

Dacre looked for them in the right direction, and fully assented to the fact of their being there.

“I suppose the youngest girl, Cecilia, I think they call her, will succeed at last in marrying that good-looking youth, George Saville: he

is talking to her now, I see : has he any fortune ? ”

“ Not much, I believe,” replied Dacre ; “ but then his waistcoats and chains would be a very handsome settlement.”

“ *Que voulez-vous ?* ” said Lady Anne, laughing. “ Surely you would have every one cultivate the gifts of nature ; and as beauty has been her only gift to him, it is obviously his duty to devote his time and money to its care and cultivation.”

The Ashbys and George Saville furnished a few more observations, and then Lady Anne carelessly remarked, —

“ How dreadfully afraid of you the Ashbys used to be at Hatton ! ”

Dacre looked surprised.

“ Why do you look so astonished ? ” pursued Lady Anne.

“Because,” rejoined Dacre, with an incredulous smile, “I fear I am too unimportant a personage to alarm either the Ashbys or any one else.”

“Is it possible,” said Lady Anne, “that you can know yourself so little, as not to be aware that you are just the sort of person of whom one is afraid?”

Dacre smiled.

“Why do you say, of whom *one* is afraid? surely fear of me must be a constitutional ailment in the Ashbys; nobody else, I should think, shared their alarm.”

“You are quite mistaken,” replied Lady Anne, more seriously: “*I* share their feelings on that subject, though not, perhaps, from quite the same cause; but I own, Mr. Dacre, there is nobody of whom I stand in greater awe than yourself.”

Dacre regarded her with unfeigned surprise; and Lady Anne had now, at least, succeeded in gaining his attention.

“ You may look surprised, and, if you please, you may not believe me; but I adhere to my confession: I am, and always have been, more afraid of you than of any body I have ever yet known.”

Dacre begged her to explain.

Lady Anne reddened, as she replied, with some little emotion, “ It is hardly fair of you to ask my reasons; and why should you be incredulous? Surely there is nothing so extraordinary for poor mortals to stand thus in awe of each other, as to make you disbelieve me! Cannot you fancy that the consciousness of many faults may produce the fear of losing the good opinion of one whose friendship is valued? Cannot you fancy that the consciousness of in-

feriority in acquirements—in conversation—in every thing—may produce the fear of being irksome ; and may not then a mere chance variation of spirits be sufficient to sound the alarm of being disapproved or shunned, and thus tinge with fear every feeling of friendship and respect ?”

“ Yes,” replied Dacre, “ I can perfectly conceive a case in which all this might be felt,” and his mind reverted to all he had experienced with respect to Lady Emily ; “ but,” continued he, recollecting himself, “ as happily nature has placed Lady Anne above any just grounds for apprehensions of this kind, you must remember that the question respecting myself is still left untouched, and I shall therefore consider your fear of me as one of those instances in which I have had the stupidity to mistake joke for earnest.”

“ Think it what you please,” said Lady Anne, looking kindly at him.

“ Then I will think it mere *persiflage*.”

“ Would it were !” said Lady Anne, in a voice that might have been audible to Dacre, but he made no reply, and there was a moment’s silence, and again he cast his eyes towards the door.

“ Is Preston here to-night ?” was Dacre’s next question.

Lady Anne was then certain her power was gone. Vexed with herself, and angry with him, she just answered his question, and immediately rose from her seat ; and whilst wounded to the quick by this blow to her vanity, she meditated fresh conquests to reap fresh disappointments.

In a few minutes more Dacre also quitted his seat.

Lady Kendal and Lady Emily made their appearance.

Dacre approached, and was kindly received by both mother and daughter. He and Lady Emily danced together, and talked together, and then the world began also to talk. And again they met, and again they talked,—and more and more people observed that they did so; and by the end of the week it had been whispered round the room that there never was such a flirtation as between Francis Dacre and Lady Emily Somers—that it must soon be declared—that it was probably settled already—that he had very likely proposed on Monday at the ball—that it was a very long attachment—quite a recent acquaintance—that Lady Kendal had made a set at him—and that the Kendals could not bear the marriage—and every other such contradictory version of the details of a fact of which none now doubted the speedy acknowledgment.

But Dacre had not yet proposed; and the consideration that had withheld him from so doing was that which made Lady Kendal rejoice that he had not yet come to an open declaration. Lord Kendal was gone out of town to pay an annual visit to one of his estates, not very far distant from London. He had been absent about a fortnight, and Lady Kendal was anxiously hoping that she should be able to inform her husband of the attachment that subsisted between their daughter and Mr. Dacre, previous to his being asked for his consent to the marriage. Lord Kendal's return had been delayed a few days longer than she expected; and Lady Kendal had sometimes thought of communicating by letter all she wished to impart: but the uncertainty of Lord Kendal's temper determined her to await his arrival. She knew how much depended with him on the

choice of a good opportunity for communicating any intelligence, and she could not tell in what mood he might be when the letter was to be read.

Dacre was aware of Lord Kendal's absence, and he was also aware that when once the declaration was made, which now hovered on his lips, he should have deprived himself of the society of Lady Emily till the sanction of her father had been asked and obtained. He resolved therefore to restrain the expression of his hopes and feelings till Lord Kendal's return, and thus spare himself the unnecessary pain of a separation of days instead of hours, from her whose every look and word were now treasured with increasing fondness.

Perhaps there were moments when Dacre found some difficulty in the practice of this self-control, but yet he scarcely wished it otherwise;

for the tacit encouragement he had received from Lady Kendal, by thus allowing him the constant enjoyment of Lady Emily's society, had lulled all his former fears of opposition from her parents. He knew that in their consent the happiness of Emily must now be as deeply involved as his own. Of late she had often spoken of the almost more than parental kindness with which she had been treated from her infancy by her father and mother. He thought himself sure of the future ; and thus, whilst he stationed himself evening after evening by her side, he forbid the intrusion of gloomy apprehensions to darken the sunshine of his present enjoyment. It is true that his happiness was based rather on hope than on certainty ; but yet whilst in her presence it seemed so complete, that he scarcely dared wish for a change.

The nearer we approach the object we de-

sire, the more must we dread lest, in attempting to place this fabric of bliss upon surer foundations, it should crumble away at our touch like the fairy forests of the white hoar frost. Like the traveller on the mountains, we gaze with breathless delight on the prospect before us, but dare not give utterance to the feelings it inspires. A sound may release the fierce avalanche from its bondage, and the word that is spoken lay waste all which he views with such hope and rapture.

CHAP. XIII.

There is such confusion in my powers,
As after some oration fairly spoke
By a beloved prince, there doth appear
Among the buzzing pleased multitude,
Where every something, being blent together,
Turn to a wild of nothing, save of joy,
Expressed and not expressed. *Merchant of Venice.*

“WHERE is Lord Kendal?” was the Duchess of Bolton’s first question, as Lady Kendal and her daughter arrived to dinner at Bolton House.

Lady Kendal, as desired, made his excuses. He had been standing a good deal before he set out in the morning; he had caught a slight cold, and preferred not again leaving his own fireside that evening, and hoped therefore that the duchess would not be angry with him for breaking his engagement.

Dacre was present, and learnt from this little dialogue that Lord Kendal was returned. The preference evinced by Lady Emily and Dacre for each other's society had been of late sufficiently marked to secure for him a place by her side at dinner.

"I hope, Lady Emily," said he, "you continue to like Mrs. Harry Molesworth?"

"The more I see of her the better I like her," replied Emily with great warmth, "and mamma is equally pleased with her: she and Captain Molesworth are coming here this evening."

Dacre was glad to hear it, and said, "I assure you Mrs. Molesworth is most sensible of the kindness she has met with from both Lady Kendal and yourself."

"We cannot lay claim, I fear, to any merit on that score," replied Lady Emily, "for we have

only been pleasing ourselves in seeking her society."

"That may be very true," rejoined Dacre; "but you know that kindness, like most other things, is valued rather by the pleasure it gives than the pain it costs."

"I hope, then," replied Emily, "that I may infer from that, that the liking is mutual."

"Do you think, Lady Emily," said Dacre, lowering his voice, "that any liking of yours could fail to be mutual? Experience must surely have taught you the value that is set upon your approbation and regard."

Emily blushed, and denied all knowledge of the value of her good opinion.

"You must remember," said Dacre, "that it is those who value it most who dare least give expression to their feelings, unless," continued he, speaking still lower, and in a tone that

could not be misunderstood, — “unless you give them permission to speak.”

Emily could scarcely conceal her emotion : she dreaded the possibility of any explanation at a moment when to betray her agitation would have been most distressing, and its concealment impossible. Scarcely knowing what to say, she remained silent ; but Dacre repeated the question by saying, “ Does silence give consent to speak, Lady Emily ? ”

Emily breathed quicker and quicker as she hastily replied, “ You cannot suppose that I give audience to the praises of myself when in company.”

Emily felt grateful to the servants who interposed wines and entrées in quick succession between Dacre and herself, and thus assisted her wish to cut short the thread of a subject on which she dared not continue ; but

Dacre had understood her meaning, and restored her composure by the change he now made for the rest of the dinner, in his manner of addressing her, and his topics of conversation.

The ladies had not long retired to the drawing room, when Lady Kendal announced to the duchess her intention of leaving her early.

“I will send the carriage later for Emily,” said she; “but as Lord Kendal is at home, and alone, I think I had better go home.”

The duchess begged that Emily might not be sent for very early, as she wished her to play and sing that evening.

Lady Kendal said she was in no hurry for her to return; and took leave of the party.

“Now,” thought she, as she stepped into her carriage, “I shall have an excellent opportunity of talking to Lord Kendal about Emily and Mr. Dacre.”

Captain and Mrs. Molesworth, and a few others, came in the evening; and, amongst the number, were two or three old friends of the duke's, who were particularly fond of music, and for whose sake the duchess had been anxious to detain her cousin. Mary and Emily sang together: the company were delighted; and song after song was called for, and Lady Emily was complimented on her good nature in singing all she was asked to sing, whilst she was more than rewarded for the effort by the look of delight with which Dacre listened to every note.

Most of the company had departed, when one of the remaining guests naming an English ballad asked Lady Emily if she knew it, and would sing it. It was the very song which Dacre had asked for in vain at Denham, and which she had then promised him to perform at some future

period. She turned involuntarily towards him as the ballad was named : their eyes met, and Emily bent her head over the music book to conceal her blushes ; but Dacre saw her embarrassment, and in an audible tone he seconded the request that they might hear it.

Emily had now no fear of being overcome by the words of that song. They embodied no longer the feelings of her mind. They told of unrequited love, and blighted hopes ; and she was conscious that miseries such as these had ceased to strike upon a sympathetic chord.

The song was over. It was supposed by the guests that Lady Emily must be tired ; and on her quitting the piano-forte some departed, and others returned to the room in which the duke was sitting, to join in conversation with him. None were now left in the music room but the Molesworths, Lady Emily, Dacre, and the

duchess. The room was large; and as Dacre approached Lady Emily, the duchess took the opportunity of showing the Molesworths some prints of such views of foreign countries as she had heard Captain Molesworth say that evening he had visited in the course of his many voyages. His attention was secured by the interrogatories of the duchess concerning the accuracy of the views at which they were looking; whilst Mary was wholly engrossed in studying every spot which Harry had seen, and listening to every word of description he gave.

Dacre saw they were occupied; and turning to Lady Emily, he offered to assist her in arranging her music. Then, approaching still nearer, he said in a low voice, "I was glad to hear that song to-night: it paints so well what I have too often felt!"

"I know it is a favourite of yours," she re-

plied ; and the music trembled in her hands as she spoke.

“ Do you remember,” continued Dacre, “ that you promised me at Denham I should hear it in London ? ”

Emily tried to smile, as she remarked, that she had been true to her word.

“ You have,” replied Dacre ; “ and I also have been true to mine.”

He paused for a moment : Emily looked intently on the sheet of blank paper before her, and pressed her arms against the piano-forte to conceal the excessive trembling of her limbs. Dacre perceived her emotion, and pointing to the group at the other end of the room, he said with a smile, —

“ We are not in company now, Lady Emily.” Then placing his hand upon hers, he said in a low and agitated voice, “ I told you that I

should not go abroad till I had once more heard that song." He stopped, drew a long breath, and then said, "Now that I have heard it, must I go?" He pressed her hand as he spoke — she did not withdraw it: — "Speak! oh speak!" murmured he, in a scarcely audible voice. "Emily! say but a word, and I shall understand you." Her agitation almost stifled her words, but his quickened hearing caught the sounds she uttered; and as the blessed words, "Then stay," fell upon his ear, he felt the pressure of his hand returned.

The explanation that followed need not be repeated—a few minutes had brought to light the secret of their hearts; but whilst Emily avowed his dominion over her happiness, she reminded him that upon her parent's consent must, of course, depend the fulfilment of their hopes. How early might he call upon Lord

Kendal, was the question. Emily mentioned the hour at which her father was usually at home.

The carriage for Lady Emily had been announced. The Molesworths had risen to depart.

“Dacre, shall we set you down?” said Harry, as he saw that he had parted from Lady Emily.

The offer was accepted, and as they got into the carriage, Harry whispered in his ear, “May I ask you one question—are you happy?”

“Not quite yet,” replied Dacre; and as the light of the lamp displayed the smile with which he said so, Harry had not a moment’s doubt that he was an accepted lover. “I must say nothing to-night,” continued he: “early to-morrow, I call on Lord Kendal.”

Harry understood this obligation to be silent,

and forbore making any further allusion to the subject, than that of begging he would let him know as soon as he returned from his visit on the morrow.

As Dacre and the Molesworths quitted the room, the duchess made Emily a sign to follow her to the boudoir that adjoined the room in which they were standing. Emily obeyed the sign.

The duchess read at once in her countenance the tale to be told, and tenderly embracing her, said, “Emily! have I not been a true prophetess?”

Emily threw her arms round her cousin, and with tears in her eyes, exclaimed, “You have indeed been right! how can I forgive myself for having even for a moment doubted his sincerity?”

“That I cannot say,” replied the duchess,

smiling; “but if you cannot forgive yourself, depend upon it he will readily forgive you. In fact, at times appearances were very much against him; and before *I* forgive him, I shall expect some excellent reasons for his having so tormented my own dear little cousin.”

Emily was sure that she alone was in fault from beginning to end; and if the duchess had suggested a doubt of his having far surpassed the limits of human perfectibility, Emily would, for once in her life, have been seriously angry even with her. No doubt was entertained of the approbation of her parents, and Emily bid her good night with the promise of despatching a note as soon as the interview between Dacre and Lord Kendal was over.

Lady Emily had hoped that her mother might not be gone to bed when she reached home, for her measurement of time had been

very inaccurate at Bolton House. It was, however, long since Lord and Lady Kendal had retired to rest ; and Emily found, to her surprise, that it was nearly two hours later than she had imagined. It was long before she could sufficiently compose herself even to prepare for the rest she now needed, and she sat and mused for a while on the strange eventful evening she had passed. A few short words had changed doubt into certainty ; and the long-cherished hope had been realised. A few short words had at once thrown over the barriers of reserve, which habit, education, and delicacy had erected, and drawn from her lips the confession of those feelings, which, under any other circumstances, she would most scrupulously have concealed. It seemed as if so little had been said ! She had even almost a difficulty in recalling what had actually passed, and yet the fate of

her life had been decided. It seemed too like a dream, and she longed for the morrow, when again they should meet. *Then*, she might hope to enjoy her happiness—*now*, it was too new—too overpowering for enjoyment. She had a feverish impatience to impart all her feelings to her mother, and yet to embody those feelings in words would have been difficult.

The extremes of joy and grief but too closely resemble each other in their first effects upon our frame, and Emily felt relief in tears to her over-excited mind. Then came that feeling of deep gratefulness, with the humble sense of her own unworthiness, which attends the consciousness of real blessings. She had often prayed, not presumptuously or lightly, for the earthly objects she desired—but humbly and fervently, that she might be so ordered in this life, as would best fit her for the purer joys of

heaven. She thought her prayer was heard in thus committing her to the care and protection of this first object of her earthly love ; and falling on her knees in pious gratitude for the happiness that awaited her, she prayed that thankfulness in prosperity, and resignation in adversity, might never forsake her.

CHAP. XIV.

Let's take the instant by the forward top,
For we are old, and on our quick'st decrees
The inaudible and noiseless foot of time
Steals ere we can effect them.

All's Well that Ends Well.

DAYLIGHT had peeped through the shutters before Emily closed her eyes, and it was later than usual the following morning when she entered her mother's dressing-room, and communicated all that had passed on the preceding evening at Bolton House.

"Mr. Dacre will be here in an hour," said Emily, "to see papa; I told him he was generally at home at that time."

Lady Kendal turned pale for a moment. "Then, my dear," she replied, "I must instantly

write him a note, to beg he will not come till the evening; your father is already gone out on business this morning." Emily was sorry; sorry for herself, and still more sorry for Dacre, who she well knew would be vexed at even the delay of a few hours.

"I suppose," said Emily, "that papa will not be much surprised by Mr. Dacre's visit; for he must know from you, mamma, how probable it was."

"No! indeed, my love," replied Lady Kendal, with some little nervousness; "I fear it will come as a complete surprise to Lord Kendal, and that is the only thing which at this moment diminishes my happiness at all you have told me." Emily looked surprised. Lady Kendal continued:

"You know that nothing worries your father more than hearing of what he calls

‘nonsensical flirtations,’ and so I had avoided speaking to him of Mr. Dacre till we came to London; then he has been out of town, and those matters are better told in conversation; and, last night, when I had meant to tell him every thing I knew and thought upon the subject, he seemed so tired, and was not quite well, that I deferred it till this morning; and this morning he went out before I was dressed, and we only met for a moment. He said he should be at home by four o’clock this afternoon. I shall then have plenty of time to talk to him before dinner, and I will write instantly to Mr. Dacre, to beg he will not come till the evening.”

“He will, I know, be very much disappointed at being put off,” said Emily; “so mind,” added she, kissing her mother, “that your note is *very* kind.” Lady Kendal smiled, and wrote the note, and then began to frame in her mind the

best mode of announcing to Lord Kendal the intelligence that awaited his return.

Lord and Lady Kendal were sincerely attached to each other ; but, unfortunately, one essential requisite for happiness was wanting to Lady Kendal—she was never perfectly at ease with her husband. He was irritable, she was timid ; and, too early in married life, she found herself obliged to study the mood in which a communication was likely to be received, and to measure her words, and to choose her opportunity.

How often is the happiness of married life destroyed by the weak indulgence of a captious temper. How often may the confidence of those who have no thought but for each other be shaken, by this uncertainty in the effect produced by their communications. How completely is the mutual ease, the unrestrained openness, the happy feeling of equality de-

stroyed, when the curl on the lip and the frown on the brow must be watched, and the tone of the voice must be listened to, ere the subject in question can with safety be broached. When once the thought that *now* is not the fitting opportunity has crossed the mind of either party, and when the delay is felt more as a reprieve than a privation, then may both be sure that for the questionable pleasure of indulged irritability, one of the blessings of matrimony has been forfeited. They are at once deprived of the comfort of that quick and open interchange of thought and feeling which should most exist in wedded life.

Lady Kendal sympathised most affectionately in the feelings of her child; her confidence in the character of Dacre was restored. She felt strongly the relief to her mind of having nothing further to dread for the happiness of her daughter;

but all comfort in these reflections was suspended by the state of nervous anxiety with which she awaited Lord Kendal's return. She knew that in whatever state of mind and spirits he might enter the house, he must equally be informed, without delay, of all that concerned her daughter and Mr. Dacre. She dreaded his displeasure at her having kept him in ignorance on the subject; and though she knew, by experience, that the displeasure would not be lasting, yet she shrunk from the thoughts of the peevish expression and the petulant tone with which his answers and interrogatories were too sure to be accompanied when displeased. She gave orders that no visitors should be admitted; and then, in fancy, sketched the conversation that would take place between herself and her husband, and rehearsed, again and again, the words in

which she would begin the intended communication.

A knock at the door was heard. No sound of a carriage had preceded that knock: the house door was opened, and in another minute footsteps were heard on the stairs. "Here comes Lord Kendal," said she to herself; "I am so glad he has come home so much earlier than he intended this morning!" and she turned pale at the thoughts of his entrance. But the footsteps passed the drawing-room door, and she rang the bell to enquire if Lord Kendal was come home.

"No, my lady," was the answer; "the Duchess of Bolton desired me to say that she was with Lady Emily, and to ask if your ladyship would see her Grace this morning."

"Oh, yes!" replied Lady Kendal; "I will

go into Lady Emily's room;" Lady Kendal drew a longer breath, and the blood mounted to her face, and she felt relieved on finding that the person she loved best on earth was not yet in the house. How strange the influence of fear! How strange that indefinite dread of imaginary dangers, which has power to upset the balance of mind and body, and to render both, through the medium of nerves, the mere slaves of our fancy!

The duchess had waited at home till two o'clock, in the expectation of receiving from Emily the promised report of Dacre's interview with Lord Kendal. Receiving none, however, she became impatient, and had walked from Bolton House, to ascertain, as she told Emily, "whether she had been so ungrateful as to forget her confidante in the last scene of the melodrame." Lady Kendal joined her niece and

daughter, and they talked together cheerfully; and Lady Kendal forgot, till the clock struck three, that the time was approaching for the dreaded conversation with Lord Kendal. The duchess took her departure with the promise of calling again on her way home from dinner late in the evening.

The clock struck four, and Lady Kendal actually started. Lord Kendal had said he should be at home at that hour; and she as much expected to see him enter the room to the chimes of the clock, as if he had been a ghost, and the hour twelve! He did not appear, and that was not very wonderful, as none but ghosts are obliged to keep time to a moment. Moreover he had made no appointment at home, and Lady Kendal felt how foolish it was to have expected him to be punctual. At half-past four, Emily peeped in, to see if her father was there.

“ Not yet,” said Lady Kendal; “ but as you are not to be present when your papa and I talk it all over first, you had better go to your room, and I will tell you the instant we have done. Hark ! there is the bell ! Run away, dear ! I am sure that is he !”

Emily did run, and looked out of her window to see if her father was at the door — and saw a footman leaving cards !

Five o'clock came. Lady Kendal rung the bell, and asked if ‘ my lord ’ was at home, and desired she might be told as soon as he returned. She tore up papers already condemned ; threw them into the fire, and then walked about the room : she could settle to nothing. The half-hour struck, and she began to think he must have been detained. Six o'clock came, and now she was sure he would soon be at home ; for he had ordered dinner at half-past six. The mi-

nute hand had reached the quarter, and Lady Kendal felt a little angry. He had made a point of dining earlier than she liked—had insisted on greater punctuality—and had told Lady Kendal that she encouraged unpunctuality by never being in time; “and then to be too late himself, is so provoking,” thought she; and for a moment felt herself almost a victim.

Half-past six came. Emily entered, dressed for dinner. She thought she had heard her father’s step some time before. She fancied she had heard her mother go to his dressing-room—thought they were at that moment discussing all that filled her heart and mind; and was not a little surprised and disappointed to find Lady Kendal standing at the window in her morning attire.

“It is very odd your father is not come home,” said Lady Kendal. “I don’t know

what to do about the dinner: he desired it might be on the table at half-past six."

"The dinner is quite ready, my lady," said the servant, who had just entered. "The cook wishes to know if it is to be sent up before my lord comes home."

Lady Kendal said, "No:" it was to be kept in readiness for his return. "I wish Lord Kendal would have been in time to-day," said she to Emily, as the servant closed the door. "One feels they must think us so capricious, not to be punctual, after all your father said upon the subject this morning."

Seven o'clock struck. Lady Kendal and Emily began to feel uneasy, and to say to each other that nothing was likely to have happened, and that there was no cause for alarm (a sure sign that the alarm is, in fact, already taken).

“How did papa go out, this morning?” enquired Emily.

“On horseback, I believe,” was the reply.

“Then had we not better send to the stables to know if the horses are returned?”

They did so : and the servant brought word back, that the groom and horses had been at home ever since half-past three : that his lordship had said it was cold, and that he should therefore walk ; and had given no further orders to the groom.

It was now near eight. All thoughts of dinner were over. Both mother and daughter grew every minute more anxious and uneasy. The servant was sent once more to the groom, to ask where he had left Lord Kendal ; and that information obtained, it was determined that two men on horseback should be despatched, in different directions, to make

enquiries at every place at which it was probable he might have visited. It was a relief to think of anything to be done. It cheated time of that prolonged existence of each minute, and for the moment it almost soothed the anxious watchers into the belief that they had hastened the event for which they watched.

It was probable that from whatever cause Lord Kendal had been detained, he would not now return on foot. The sound of each approaching vehicle gave rise to feverish hope. Their lips were parched ; their tongues seemed to cleave to the roofs of their mouths, as they listened in speechless anxiety to the noise of every passing carriage. More than once the sound appeared to be fast approaching their door, and the mother and the daughter involuntarily turned their eyes towards each

other, till the deception was over — the rumble of the wheels had faded gradually on the ear ; and then the sickness of disappointment succeeded the quick beat of expectation that had excited them for an instant before. The return of the grooms was awaited with increasing impatience ; for the agony of suspense was becoming each minute more intolerable. A word of real information might break the chain of frightful shapeless terrors, which imagination had raised. Not the well in the desert is more wanted to slake the thirst of the traveller, than that which can soothe for a moment the torture of doubt. Like the air that is supplied to those who have gone to the depths below, comes the word of information to relieve the fearful tension of suspense, and save the sufferer from his bursting agony.

Lady Kendal and Emily listened in vain for

the sound of the horsemen's return. The grooms were still pursuing their unsuccessful search in quest of their master. Again the sound of wheels was heard; but they had listened to that sound so often in vain, that they tried not to heed the noise. For a time it seemed scarcely to approach; but still it continued: other carriages passed by at the rapid pace of pleasure or of business, and, for a moment, interrupted this slow advancing sound: but nearer and nearer it drew; and they could no longer withhold their attention from the direction whence it came. It was within a few doors of the house, and as it still approached, they held their breath; the impulse was involuntary, for they had done so often before on that evening, and they expected but the same disappointing result. It now was close to the door: they listened for its continuance,

but the sound had stopped. They looked at each other, and at that instant the bell was rung. Lady Kendal grasped her daughter's hand: the band of terror seemed tightly to bind their heads — their eyes were fixed, as though they looked for certainty in the vacant air — motionless, and pale as death, they sat for an instant to catch the sound that followed. The steps of the carriage were let down, — footsteps were heard on the stairs. Emily would have sprung from her seat, but her mother's hand was locked in hers, — and with Lady Kendal the power of motion seemed suspended. A commotion was heard in the hall: Lady Kendal clung tighter to her daughter. The door opened, and a stranger entered.

“Tell me ——” said Lady Kendal, — she was almost stifled, and she could not speak. The stranger approached.

“For God’s sake tell me, sir, if you know any thing of my father?” exclaimed Emily, in a tone that showed how deep was their alarm.

“I am come for that purpose,” replied the stranger: “but,” added he, in a voice of kindness, “ladies, I intreat you to be composed.” Oh, what a knell of grief does that entreaty ring upon the ear of those, who once have known affliction!

“Tell me the worst!” said Lady Kendal, in the hurried tone of desperation.

The stranger hesitated, and looked at Lady Emily to see if he might proceed in safety.

“Where is he?” exclaimed Lady Kendal, in a louder voice; and her eyes seemed to start from her head as she glared on the stranger.

“Lord Kendal is in the house,” replied he, in a soothing voice: “he is still alive.”

Lady Kendal fell upon her daughter’s neck :

she gave one loud hysterical sob, and tears came to her relief. "Thank God, he is safe!" at length burst from her lips. She had been unconscious of the accent he had laid upon *still*. She had heard he was alive, and joy for a moment had blotted out fear. Emily had heard that accent, — had understood its sad meaning. She turned, imploringly, to the stranger, to explain its dreaded purport.

"Lord Kendal is *still alive*," repeated he, "and we hope he is safe; but I must not deceive you, madam," continued he, looking kindly on the wretched wife as he spoke: "Lord Kendal's state is precarious."

Lady Kendal looked on him wildly, as if she could not comprehend his meaning, and with a quick movement she rose from her seat, saying, "I must go to him: I cannot understand you."

“Excuse me,” interposed he, “I will accompany you, this moment, to Lord Kendal; but I must warn you of the danger to his lordship from the slightest agitation.”

Emily laid her hand on her mother to detain her. Lady Kendal stopped. The stranger’s warning made her feel the necessity of composing herself.

The stranger was a surgeon, and he now quickly informed them that Lord Kendal had been seized with a fit not far from where he resided, and that he had been sent for by the chemist, into whose shop he was taken; that Lord Kendal had remained for hours in a state of insensibility, and that they could find no cards or letters by which he could be identified; that, after being copiously bled, his consciousness and speech had sufficiently returned to enable him to give his name and address; and,

that, with the assistance of the chemist, they had then immediately brought him home at a foot's pace.

The surgeon particularly requested that the physician who usually attended Lord Kendal should be sent for directly, and he then descended with Lady Kendal and her daughter to the room in which he had begged the patient might be placed when lifted from the carriage.

Lord Kendal lay extended at full length on the sofa. A man was employed in bathing his head with some cold application : his eyes were closed ; his features seemed drawn, and he was apparently unconscious of all that was passing around him. He had been cupped on the neck, and the blood stains on the neckcloth, tied loosely round the throat, added greatly to the ghastly effect of his appearance. Lady Kendal and Emily sickened at the sight, when

first they entered the room; and it was with difficulty that they sustained themselves from fainting. But they were now called upon to act, and all other feelings were forgotten. Lord Kendal was immediately to be carried up stairs to the quietest room in the house.

The physician was sent for, and the boy was instantly to be fetched from school.

CHAP. XV.

The ample proposition that hope makes
In all designs begun on earth below,
Fails in the promised largeness: checks and disasters
Grow in the veins of actions highest rear'd,
As knots by the conflux of meeting sap,
Infect the sound pine, and divert his grain,
Tortive and errant from his course of growth.

Troilus and Cressida.

It was not long after these arrangements had been completed, that Lady Emily was called out of the room. Her maid put a card into her hand, saying that the gentleman had insisted on its being taken to her ladyship, as he wished particularly to see her, if only for a minute. Emily desired he might be shown into the drawing-room; then, returning to her mother, she gave the card, and told her she had consented to see him.

“ You were right, my love,” said Lady Kendal: “ there is nothing more to be done for your father at this moment.”

Emily descended to the drawing-room. Dacre was standing before the fire, his eyes fixed in reverie, his countenance pale and thoughtful. He started as Emily approached; and eagerly seized the hand that was tendered to him. Emily tried to speak, but the sight of Dacre completely overcame her; and, seating herself on the nearest sofa, she buried her face in her hands, burst into tears, and sobbed aloud.

Dacre could scarcely repress his rising emotion. He had looked upon his intended interview with Lord Kendal as a matter rather of form than of fear. He had come on a mission of hope and joy, and had found himself at once in the house of sorrow. He had pictured to his mind the smile, the blush, the sparkling eye, the joyous step,

with which Emily would receive him that evening; and he had found death on the threshold of hope, and all sadness and gloom within.

“ You are not angry with me, dearest, for having asked you to see me,” said he, in a low and soothing tone, as he placed himself by her side, and gently took her hand.

“ No, no,” replied Emily, still weeping, “ it was very kind of you — I wished to see you — but I cannot speak. Do you know —— ”

“ Yes, yes, I know all,” interrupted he; “ you shall not pain yourself by telling me what I can learn from others.”

“ I did not see him this morning,” continued she: “ only this morning, he was well and strong; and now —— ” she shuddered. “ Oh, Mr. Dacre, he has been such a father ! ” and again her tears flowed fast, and choked her utterance.

“ But there may yet be hope,” said he, endeavouring to soothe her agitation.

“ There may — God grant there may be ! but I have none.”

“ But why, dearest Emily, should you yet despair ?”

“ Because,” said she, speaking almost in a whisper, “ I heard the surgeon say that there was no hope. He did not know I was in the room. Poor mamma ! she was spared that blow ; but she too must soon know it —— My dear, dear father !” again burst from her lips, and she sobbed till she became almost hysterical.

“ For heaven’s sake, calm yourself, my own beloved Emily !” said Dacre.

Emily made an effort to do so ; and she pressed the hand in which her own was held. She looked at him. The tears were in her

lover's eyes. She checked her own, and in a low subdued voice said, "I will be calm, I will try to be resigned — forgive me that I have so distressed you!"

"Forgive you!" exclaimed he; "can you think that your sorrow is not mine? Are not our hearts already one? Surely, Emily, you have not, even in your distress, forgotten all that passed last evening?"

"Oh, no!" replied she, "I remembered it too well; and when I thought of your happiness then, and saw how wretched I had made you now, I feared that grief had already made me selfish. But I must not stay," added she, rising from her seat: "I cannot bear to be absent from his room."

"Go, then, dearest!" said Dacre, looking tenderly at her: "I must not detain you. It

was not alone the selfish pleasure of seeing you that made me urge my admittance, but to implore of you to take care of yourself."

Emily assured him that her strength was not likely to fail.

Dacre shook his head. "You know not yet," he said, "how thin the sword can wear the scabbard. Emily, dearest Emily! I conjure you to take care of your health in this dreadful trial. Remember that I ask it for the sake of all who know and love you, for your family, for your mother, and for me!—yes, Emily! you have given me the right to say—for *my* sake take care of yourself."

Emily acknowledged that right, and thanked him with a look more expressive than words, for his anxiety on her account. "It has done me good seeing you," said she: "I feel calmer

now than when I first came down — I hope more equal to the trial that awaits us.”

“ God bless you for these words,” said Dacre, as he pressed her hand to his lips.

“ Good night !” said she, her eyes again swimming with tears ; “ pray for me, pray for us — we shall need support from Him who alone can give it.”

Dacre could not speak. They parted ; and as he brushed away the tear that dimmed his sight, he gazed on her once more as she quitted the room. “ Yes,” thought he to himself, “ heaven will preserve and support her in this her affliction. Surely heaven will protect angels such as she, who are sent to purify our hearts, and lift our thoughts on high in gratitude and praise to their Creator.”

Emily returned to her father’s room. Her

mother was seated by the bed. A slight change had taken place during her short absence. Lord Kendal had shewn signs of life, and a low moaning, and an occasional movement of the head, dispelled, for a time, that fearful semblance to a corpse which he had hitherto borne. Towards morning he slept, and they feared a stupor; but no, the sleep was tranquil, he breathed more freely, and the wife and child sat silent and motionless by his side; whilst the hope that had withered a few hours back, now budded again into life. On waking, he for the first time opened his eyes, turned them towards those who were nearest, and a faint smile of recognition passed over his countenance as he looked at Lady Kendal and Emily. They stooped to kiss him, and again he slept. This return of consciousness overcame the seeming calmness with which they had for some hours

forced themselves to watch the sufferer. It was too like the return from death to life to be witnessed with composure, and they withdrew for a moment to mingle tears of hope revived, which could no longer be restrained.

The physician saw their error, and soon followed them to the room into which they had retired. It is vain and unjust to suppose that the habits of professional life must necessarily deaden the feelings of humanity; and as Lady Kendal turned to him as if beseeching he would confirm their hope, he saw, with bitter regret, that on him had fallen the physician's hardest task. How sad an office to plunge the dagger where he would have healed the wound! but he must now destroy the hope he would have given — the hope he would have cherished — the hope he would have realised. He must extinguish the light that had broken

in upon their gloom, lest the treacherous beacon should lure them to a height from which the fall must greatly increase the danger to themselves.

“Whatever may be our opinion,” said he, “whilst there is life, we must act as if there were hope. We shall leave nothing untried:” and they repaired to the patient’s room, to await the first opportunity of administering some fresh remedy.

It was soon after Dacre had left the house, on the preceding evening, that the Duchess of Bolton had called, according to her promise in the morning, and it was not till late at night that Lady Kendal persuaded her to return home. At Bolton House she found Dacre awaiting her arrival. He had determined to inform her of the grounds on which he placed

his right to be now treated in some degree as one of the family; but he found she was already informed of all he had to tell, and that in her he might look for a friend who could sympathise in the feelings of painful anxiety to which the state of poor Lord Kendal had given rise in himself. The duchess promised to forward to him the early bulletin that she was herself to receive. She did so, and at the same time proposed that he should accompany her to Lord Kendal's house, and await his opportunity of seeing Emily or Lady Kendal.

The duchess was summoned up stairs immediately on their arrival, in order that she might be told every symptom that had occurred since they had parted at night; and Dacre was left alone in the drawing-room. He had not been there long when Lady Kendal entered. She

had come in quest of something she had left there the preceding evening, and was not aware that Dacre was in the house. She started on seeing him; then approached, shook him kindly by the hand, and would have spoken, but her emotion was too great. They had not met since his explanation with Emily — since she had known he was the accepted lover of her daughter; and the sight of him greatly affected her.

“Forgive me,” said Dacre, “for having startled you: but, dear Lady Kendal, do not look upon me now as an intruder.”

“I do not,” replied Lady Kendal, in a voice scarcely audible; “and I am glad you came.”

For a moment she paused, as if endeavouring to command her agitation; then seizing his hand, she said in a low and hurried tone, “She

will be yours, Mr. Dacre! — you will be her protector: you must supply ——”

She could not go on. She pressed his hand affectionately, and quitted the room.

During the day no material change took place in Lord Kendal's state. Towards the evening he again opened his eyes. He looked at all who surrounded his bed: he saw amongst them strange faces: he saw on all the stamp of sorrow and anxiety. Again he closed his eyes for a few minutes, then making a sign to the physician to approach him, he whispered a few words into his ear. The physician did not answer, and again Lord Kendal remained tranquil and silent. A tear stole gently down his cheek. He looked at Lady Kendal — then at Emily, and in a feeble voice said, “Henry.” They understood his meaning; and his son, a boy of about twelve years of age, was brought

to his bed-side. He motioned to them to approach still nearer.

“Louisa !” said he, addressing his wife, “I do not suffer, but I know I am dying.”

Lady Kendal pressed her lips to his. He returned the kiss.

“I fear,” continued he, “that I have sometimes vexed you ; but tell me, love, that all is forgiven, and I shall die happier.”

Lady Kendal would have suppressed her bursting agony of grief, as she endeavoured to reply ; but the sobs of her boy now broke upon her ear ; and the feelings of the mother and the wife completely overpowered her, and she buried her face in the pillow.

“Try to be composed, dearest !” said the dying man, as the tears in quick succession now chased each other down his sunken cheeks. “My children, you must support your mother.”

Emily and Henry knelt by his side. “Emily ! you will probably marry ; and may you be as blessed, as a wife, as you deserve. You have both been dear children to me !” Emily kissed her father. “Harry ! you will now have but one parent ; you must give to your mother the affection and attention you would have given us both.” He was bathed in the tears of his children --- they buried their faces in his. His voice grew weaker. “God bless you all !” said he, after a pause. “Pray for your father—pray for me, Louisa—I will pray for you all—I will pray for myself.” He raised his eyes, moved his lips in prayer : they tried to catch the sounds he uttered — they heard him say, “Thy will be done,” and all was still ; his lips parted, but he never spoke again. For a moment that stillness was broken ; the frightful rattling in the throat, which announced the moment of disso-

lution, told the mourners that death was at hand ; and then a short convulsive struggle, and all was over. His spirit had fled, and Lady Kendal and Emily were carried senseless from the room.

CHAP. XVI.

All things that are ordained festival
Turn from their office to black funeral :
Our instruments to melancholy bells ;
Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast ;
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change ;
Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,
And all things change them to the contrary.

Romeo and Juliet.

WHEN Emily returned to consciousness, she found that Dacre was seated by her side. His presence was a comfort, for he forbore to talk of comfort ; but she saw in his tender sympathy for her grief, the only earthly consolation that could be given at such a moment. Long as Dacre had loved her — loved her, as he had done, with all the constancy, the ardour, and the passion of

his nature, he now felt that something was added to the intensity of his former affection. The love that is kindled in the bright hour of prosperity will glisten and dazzle, but it may blind by its light, or be too quickly consumed; but the love that is kindled in the twilight of sorrow, will softly illumine our path through the shades of this life. Like the moonbeams that play upon the dark surface of the waters, will that flame shed its mild yet powerful influence: unchanged, serene, and pure, it will shine, and cheer the hours of darkness, of sadness, and of gloom. Dacre had been attracted, enchanted, and enchained, by the beauty, the manner, the grace — the talents, the disposition, and the varied charms of the gay and brilliant Emily; yet not all these combined had raised in his heart a love so pure and holy as that with which he

now regarded the bereaved and weeping daughter of affliction.

The interview was short: perfect quiet was deemed absolutely necessary for Emily, and Dacre was not, therefore, allowed to protract his stay. He parted with the promise of being again admitted the following day, and Emily consented to take the opiate which the physician considered almost indispensable, after all that she had undergone the last twenty-four hours. It proved, however, of little avail; for she had not closed her eyes, when she was again aroused by the entrance of her mother's maid. Lady Kendal had been taken ill with a feverish attack, and it was many hours before the fever had yielded sufficiently to the remedies for Emily again to leave her.

Dacre called at the appointed hour, but Emily was then asleep. The duchess saw him, and

advised that he should call again later in the day. He did so; but the servant said he knew that Lady Emily was then engaged with Lady Kendal, and he determined therefore to come in the evening; but the physician had insisted that Emily, fatigued and exhausted in body and mind, should retire to bed, and had told the duchess that on no account must she be allowed to do any thing that could produce additional excitement that day. The duchess explained this to Dacre when he called; and the idea that her health might possibly be endangered by the gratification of his own wish to see her, in some measure softened the bitterness of his disappointment. But still it was a disappointment; and, vexed and dispirited, he retired to his home to brood over the sad thoughts which arise from the sorrows and sufferings of those whom we love.

Lord Kendal's will was opened. He had appointed Lady Kendal and the Duke of Bolton guardians to his son. The family seat at Oakley Park was to be the residence of Lady Kendal till her son came of age. The house in London was to be hers for her life. Upon Emily all that had been settled upon younger children naturally devolved, and, in addition to that settlement, Lord Kendal had added a considerable sum of money. Emily might now therefore be considered an heiress. But never does the impuissance of wealth strike more forcibly upon the mind than in the hour of affliction; never does its nothingness appear so null as when the vanities it gives can no longer attract. It cannot procure the talents, the beauty, the charms, that we covet; it cannot secure the affections we prize; it cannot bring back the loved spirit that has fled. It can give us neither the comfort of

hope, nor the blessing of content ; it cannot purchase innocence to the guilty, nor restore to the wretched the happiness that is lost. No ! it is not in adversity that the pleasures of wealth can be tasted. The heart sickens at the sights and sounds of pomp and state. The spirit that is broken shrinks from the distinctions which wealth can create. The golden fount yields no refreshment to the bleeding heart. The mourner seeks some purer stream to stanch the wound.

The duchess found on her return to Lady Kendal's the following morning that she was better—had had no return of fever, but still kept her bed. The duchess proceeded to Emily's room. In her the change was appalling. She acknowledged that she had not closed her eyes during the night : she seemed unwilling to speak, even to her cousin ; and there was a look of fixed despair on her coun-

tenance which seriously alarmed the duchess. The physician was in Lady Kendal's room, and to him she imparted her fears, and begged he would give her his opinion. The physician saw no cause for real alarm as to her health, but he considered her present state one of reaction; and that the painful excitement in which she had passed the last few days would fully account for any degree of mental or bodily depression.

“When will you like to see him, dearest?” said the duchess, in a caressing manner, when they were again alone.

“See *whom*?” said Emily, in the same dull and apathetic tone in which she had spoken before.

The duchess took her hand. “You must know who I mean, dear Emily: when will you see Mr. Dacre?”

Emily did not reply: she turned her face away from her cousin. “I have promised to let him know,” continued she, putting her arm round Emily’s neck, “so, dear, you will tell me when he may come.”

Emily’s lip quivered, — her eyes filled with tears. “Why? — why do you ask me?” she exclaimed, in a voice of despair. Then pressing her hand to her forehead, she was for a while overpowered by the agony of her feelings; and then came that fearful laugh, which seems to mock the grief that made it feel. A thrill of horror ran through the duchess. For a moment she was possessed by the frightful thought that reason had sunk under the blow that had stricken her. But in time this dreadful agitation subsided; and, turning to the duchess, she said, in a voice and manner that more nearly resembled her own, “You shall leave me now,

dear Caroline. I want rest and quiet. I shall be more composed soon."

The duchess folded her to her heart and quitted the room. "She will be better," thought she, "when Mr. Dacre has been with her: she is too nervous now to know what is best for herself, but his kindness and affection must and will soothe her."

No sooner had she closed the door than Emily fell on her knees, and long and fervently she prayed for support in this hour of trial.

The servants at Lady Kendal's had become sufficiently aware of Dacre's position in the family to offer no longer any doubts as to his admittance; and when next he came he was ushered into the drawing-room, there to await the result of Lady Emily being informed of his arrival. The habit, so common in large establishments, of transferring a message through

the medium of various individuals, occasioned so much delay, that it never succeeded in reaching Emily's ear that Dacre was there. Dacre had waited long and impatiently, and he was beginning to think of ringing the bell to enquire, whether Lady Emily had been told he was come, when he heard a slight noise in the adjoining room. It sounded like a low moan, and he gently opened the door, to see who was there. Emily was seated at a table: she was resting on her arms, and her face was hidden with her hands. Writing materials were before her; but the convulsive sob that shook her frame must have rendered her incapable of using them.

Dacre paused for a moment. There is something so sacred in grief, that we fear to disturb its ebullitions. We fear to break in upon that luxury of woe, which seems all that is left to

the mourner in the first hours of bereavement. We scarcely dare to sever the spell with which sorrow can bind, lest some dream of the past should rudely be dispelled, and the dreamer too soon awakened to the sense of his loss. Dacre hoped she would look up; but he hoped in vain. He determined to speak, and he called her by her name in the gentlest voice, lest he should startle her by a sound. She heard her name, but mistook the direction from which it came. She looked aside as she started to her feet; and with an air of excitement that bordered on wildness she exclaimed, "Who calls?" She spoke as if in terror.

"Dearest Emily!" said Dacre, advancing a step into the room. There was now no mistake. The voice was recognised. She turned suddenly round. Dacre stood before her. She uttered a loud and piercing shriek, and

fell senseless on the floor. Dacre sprang forward: he lifted her in his arms — placed her on the sofa — rung the bell violently for assistance, and then, in an agony of terror, he bent over the figure that lay in death-like stillness before him, and placed his hand upon her heart. The beat was faint, but still it beat; and he knew that life was not extinct.

The bell had been heard throughout the house. Languid and exhausted with the fatigue of getting up, Lady Kendal had just been placed on the sofa, when the alarm reached her ears of Emily's state. Maternal love gave vigour to her frame; for a while the overwhelming misery of the widow was suspended by the anxiety of the mother, and she ran down the stairs, and flew to the side of her unconscious child, with all the elasticity of youth and health. The usual restoratives were instantly applied,

but Emily moved not: her hair had been unfastened in her fall, and hung loosely on her shoulders; her cheeks were blanched; her eyes closed, and her hand dropped powerless at her side. She lay like a marble monument to youth and innocence — so still — so pure — so lovely. One only sign of life she gave; her breast was sometimes heaved by a convulsive sigh. It seemed as if the sign of sorrow had alone outlived the fatal stroke of death. Medical assistance was procured; but for hours she remained insensible. In answer to the necessary enquiries respecting the immediate cause of this attack, the physician was informed by Lady Kendal of her engagement with Mr. Dacre. It was evident he thought that his unexpected presence had been too much for her over-excited nerves; and he gave it as his positive opinion, that on no account must she

see him, when first emerging from her present state.

Long had they watched, in anxious fear, for some symptom of returning consciousness, which the physician had assured them would in time return. At length, her eyes again opened. She saw her mother and the duchess by her side, and she looked calm; but her eye soon kindled, her cheek flushed, and in the harsh, discordant tones of delirium she exclaimed, “Go! — You must go! — Francis, I will not be detained! — My father!”

A shrill cry burst from her lips as she uttered that word: she threw her arms wildly over her head, and sprung forwards, as if to free herself from the restraint of some imaginary hold. The delirium of fever was upon her. For a time her life was in danger; but youth, and the natural strength of her constitution,

overcame the attack. All excitement was over. She was weakened, but she was calm; and Dacre was in the hourly hope of being allowed again to approach her without endangering her recovery.

It had been a painful aggravation to his anxiety to endure this complete separation. Dreadful as it sometimes is, and must be, to witness the sufferings of those we love, it is bliss, when compared to the far greater misery of being absent, and becoming thus a prey to the power of imagination. There are moments of comparative tranquillity to those who can watch; but to those who can only reflect, there is none.

CHAP. XVII.

Go, speak not to me ; even now begone.
 O, go not yet ! Even thus two friends condemn'd
 Embrace and kiss, and take ten thousand leaves,
 Loather a hundred times to part than die.
 Yet now farewell ; and farewell life with thee !

Henry VI. Part II.

THE heartfelt sympathy of the Molesworths, and the extreme kindness of both the Duke and the Duchess of Bolton, supported Dacre, in some measure, through this trying ordeal ; and he spent the greater part of his time at Bolton House, in order that he might be more constantly supplied with information respecting Emily's progress. The duchess's last report had been so favourable, that Dacre imparted to Harry Molesworth the joyful hope that

within another twenty-four hours he should probably be again permitted to visit her. On that hope he slept, — with that hope he awoke, — with that hope he walked to Bolton House the next morning, but the duchess was already out. The duke said that Emily had begged she would come to her later than usual that day; and the duchess had therefore determined to go out earlier, in order to execute that mass of daily business which ladies always have to execute, before she went to Lady Kendal's. Dacre was too much occupied with the happy thought of being summoned by Emily, to do or think of aught besides; and he returned to his home, lest any note from either her or the duchess should be sent to him there.

It was not often that Dacre had to fight against the disposition to be over-sanguine; but this day he had. He knew that the in-

tensity of the wish again to behold Emily was father to the expectation; but yet he did expect on that particular day that the longed-for summons would arrive. He could not help it, and at every knock at the door he was irresistibly led to the window, by the belief that he should see a note delivered by some well-known servant. Again the knock was heard; and, in spite of his many previous disappointments, Dacre once more threw up the sash to see who was there.

“I was sure it was,” said he to himself, as he shut down the window. He had seen a servant of Lady Kendal’s at the door, and his cheek glowed with happiness, as he awaited the entrance of the long wished-for note. The note proved a letter. Dacre was surprised at its length; and as he glanced his eye hastily over the writing, he caught sight of some words,

which made his heart sink within him : but he must be mistaken — the context would certainly explain — he would read it calmly — he was sure that the sight of Emily's hand could bode no ill ; but yet the paper trembled as he held it, and read as follows : —

“ I must no longer delay writing. The time is come when you will naturally expect that we should meet again. I have been ill — I believe dangerously ill ; but I am now recovering, and it would be weakness in me, and cruelty towards you, any longer to conceal the truth from your knowledge. You know that the supposed cause of my sudden fainting, and succeeding illness, was the shock of seeing you unexpectedly. The supposition was right. It was, I know, the sight of you that overcame my senses — *that* I remember. I now see you standing in the doorway ; and from that moment, to the time

when I was told I had been ill, I remember nothing distinctly. You were the last image that dwelt that day upon my mind; and that vision of you will never be effaced. The supposition was right, that the sight of you had overcome, for a while, both reason and health; but they knew not the real cause. None but myself knew the cause. I have since told my mother — and now my head swims: I dare write no more at present.”

The letter was continued the following morning.

“ I left off last night, for I am still weak in body and in mind, and I could not continue. The effort of writing this letter is even greater than I expected. On the morning we last met, I had come down stairs for the purpose of then writing to you all I have now to say: my mind was overwrought; and the sight of you, whom

I never thought to see again, was too much for my distracted senses. Oh, Mr. Dacre! you must know how sincerely I have returned your affection. You do know with what devotion I have loved you. Yes! I have acknowledged my love, in that one hour of hope and happiness, and I will not retract its acknowledgment now, in my despair. We must never meet again! Francis! dearest Francis! forgive me the wretchedness I have brought upon you. Willingly would I have forfeited my life to spare you the pain of such a blow. But my resolution is fixed. Ask me not the reason. I have told you my love is unchanged. There is not a feeling in your heart towards me, which I do not return with twofold affection. Judge then by your heart of the extent of my sacrifice. Nothing can alter my determination. It is based

on a principle dearer than life, dearer than all that could make life valuable.

“ Write to me one line; tell me that you forgive me — tell me that you pity me — tell me that you will try to forget me — but do not try to alter my resolution. Do not seek to see me. The privacy of domestic affliction will spare me from the chances of again meeting for a while; and should you remain in England we shall probably retire to the Continent: it is better for both that we should be far asunder. I implore of you to be resigned to the fate to which we are now condemned. Think of me with kindness, but not with love; and if, when time and change have deadened my image in your mind, some other happier love should again bring joy into your heart, remember that on me you will then have conferred the only happiness this world

can give. To know that you have ceased to suffer can alone restore my peace. God bless and protect you. We must pray for each other in this hour of trial. I shall pray that my life and my strength may endure so long as I can be of comfort or use to my poor widowed mother. And for you, dearest Francis, night and morning will I pray for every blessing that life and immortality can bestow. Once more, God bless you."

"Farewell!" had been written below, but tears had blotted that sad word. Dacre dropped the letter from his hand: his head was dizzy: for a time he was stupified by this sudden and unexpected blow. But a few minutes back he had gazed on his happiness as a substantial reality now within reach. He had looked again, and it was gone. It was not dimmed, removed, diminished, but — gone; gone without prepar-

ation, without noise, without aught to disturb the seeming security of its foundation. His happiness had been built on the strength of her affections: that strength was not diminished, and yet the superstructure had vanished. The fair fabric he had looked on with hope and delight had been engulfed in a moment: not a vestige was left of all he had raised; and, like the lost wanderer on the barren plain, he stood alone,—his beacon gone, his hopes defeated, and all around a dreary blank, without an object left to point his wishes, or to guide his steps.

There are events in life that seem too great, too sudden, too overwhelming, to be true. We cannot believe that the hopes, the joys, and the sorrows of life, can depend on the work of a minute. We measure by the hours, the days, and the years, that have been spent in their anticipation, enjoyment, or endurance. We look

to the gradual realisation of our hopes and wishes ; we think our joys will be weakened by decay, ere they depart. We trust that time will wear away, with its slow workings, the keenness of sorrow : but on these sudden revulsions of fate we are too much startled to believe them possible, and the first impression is to doubt the reality of the change that has been wrought.

Dacre placed the letter again before him : he looked at it ; his eyes followed the words, but his understanding went not with them. He was stunned, he was petrified ; and again he read it : his lips were parted, his mouth was parched, his eyes were unnaturally open, he was cold as death, and yet his forehead felt on fire : it seemed as if life itself had flowed from every other part, to add vigour to the suffering of his mind. And again he read it : and now he

dwelt upon each word of fondness, and a tear trickled unconsciously down his cheek. Yes! nature had her way, and Dacre wept. Oh, what a bitter grief is that, which wrings a tear from manhood in his prime! Man seldom weeps for man. He can see his comrades fall in battle: he can stanch, unmoved, the bleeding wound; he can follow to the grave, with a firm and steady step, the relative, the friend who loved him with a brother's love. Perhaps it needs the tenderness of woman to arouse his softer sympathies; perhaps it needs her softening influence to give power to the impressions that are made; perhaps he thinks how she would have wept for him, and shall he not, in return, weep for her suffering and sorrow? Shall not his footsteps tremble, where hers would have faltered? and will not he shed a tear on the grave where is laid the mother who nurtured,

the sister who played, the wife who adored, or the bride who was pledged to him? Yes! for woman he weeps. The sternness of man is overcome by her gentleness, and their natures are thus assimilated by the sympathy that binds them.

Dacre felt that there was in Emily's letter a firmness of determination he could not hope to move: yet he would write to her; he would implore her to see him; he would beseech her to tell him the cause of this sudden resolution; he would appeal to her mother; he would appeal to the duchess; he would willingly endure any term of probation she pleased to inflict. He would ask it as a right, not thus to be condemned, unheard, to misery for life. Of what was he accused? what had he done? If any fault of his had brought upon himself this punishment, gladly would he endure the infliction of any penance

she would name, would she but retract that dreadful sentence of eternal separation. Would she but hold out to him any hope of forgiveness, if he had offended ; then would he endeavour to be reconciled to his present fate ; then would he hope, by a life of love and devotion on his part, to repay the mercy she had shown, in now revoking this cruel decree. She had said her heart was not changed, and how could he doubt her truth ? And if her love was still unchanged, she could not — would not — let him plead in vain. It was thus he determined to write to her. In the evening he received the following answer : —

“ You have pained me more than I can describe. Why did you write as if I had the power, but not the will, to recant the purport of my letter this morning ? I must again repeat, it is impossible : I cannot — I dare not : I have

nearly paid the forfeit of my life to come to this resolution ; I have done more — I have inflicted pain and disappointment on you ; and can you suppose that, if to yield to persuasion were possible, I would voluntarily have endured all this agony ? Urge me not, dearest Mr. Dacre, I entreat of you ; though my heart should break under this trial, I would not, must not, bend. I had never thought to address you again : it is but to lengthen the sufferings of both ; and I wish to be regarded as one dead in your mind : but some expressions in your letter have induced me once more to write. You speak as if I had acted from some resentment towards you, as if you had been in error. Most solemnly I assure you, that such is not the case. No, dearest Francis, you could not offend me, and I could not resent even injury from *you*. Ask me not to explain. I implore of you, by the love you bear me,

to seek no explanation. You have committed no fault: my heart is unchanged; but I repeat — we must never meet again. Forgive me! This is my last request; and now all is over. I will not write again. God bless and preserve you!”

Dacre had not long perused this final blow to every hope when footsteps were heard upon the stairs. It was so impossible at that hour in the evening that it should be a visitor, that he gave no attention to the sound; but in a minute his door was opened, and the Duke of Bolton entered.

“Dacre,” said he, shaking him kindly by the hand, “I have forced myself in, but you must forgive me; I could not let the evening pass without seeing you.”

Dacre thanked him, and thought by the duke’s manner that he was aware of what had passed. He asked him if he knew all.

“ I do,” replied the duke. “ The duchess has been with Emily this whole afternoon, and all that she has told her I know.”

“ The duchess, then, knows the cause of this sudden determination,” said Dacre, eagerly.

“ No,” said the duke : “ Caroline knows only the purport of the letter you received this morning. Emily has positively refused to tell, even her, the motives that have induced her to break off her engagement. Her mother alone knows : she approves; and Caroline, of course, has no right to interfere.”

“ Can it be Lady Kendal who has wrought all this misery?” said Dacre.

“ No,” rejoined the duke; “ I know it is entirely Emily’s own doing. Her resolution was taken before she spoke to her mother on the subject. Broken hearted as Lady Kendal is at the loss of her husband, Caroline says that

this change in the prospects of her daughter has greatly added to her misery, and yet she approves.

“How incomprehensible!” exclaimed Dacre; “but may there not still be hope from the duchess’s influence? She has been already so kind a friend to me, may I not hope that she will again exert herself in my behalf?”

“Could her exertions be of any avail, my dear friend, your success would be secured. There is nothing she would not do, nothing that we would not both do, not only to serve you, but to serve Emily. We dread the effects upon herself of her own resolution.”

Dacre sighed, he could not speak.

“But, alas!” continued the duke, “at present nothing can be done. Emily has implored the duchess not to speak to her on the subject. She says she can support herself better in

silence ; that at some distant period she will explain her conduct to Caroline, but not now."

Dacre was silent for a minute. " Then," said he at length, " there is no hope, even from the duchess's kindness."

" None, I fear," replied the duke: " no man can tell the events that time will bring ; but at present I fear that we must consider this engagement at an end : it grieves me to say so ; but there is no use in shrinking from the truth. Now," said he, after a short pause, " I must tell you that I have a favour to beg of you. To-morrow I go out of town for a short time to our villa—will you come with me ? The duchess will follow in a few days. The Molesworths have promised to join us there : we shall, of course, have no other company."

Dacre felt his kindness deeply, and the offer was accepted. Nothing could be more soothing

to him, under existing circumstances, than the kindness he received from those to whom Emily was dear. He felt that to the duchess, in particular, he could open his heart; and it was a relief to him to do so. Long and often did he talk over with her the possible cause of this unhappy change in his prospects; for she could sympathise in his feelings, though she could not enlighten him as to the motives which had induced Emily to break off her engagement.

“Of the cause of this change I cannot even surmise,” said the duchess one day, as she returned from a walk, during which no other subject had been discussed between Dacre and herself; “but of this I am sure, nothing will alter her determination. It must have sprung from some fixed principle of what is right: her mother approves; and I am persuaded that no power on earth will shake her. She has great

firmness of character ; and the motive that is sufficiently powerful to induce so dreadful a sacrifice of her happiness cannot and probably ought not to be changed by persuasion."

A few mornings afterwards the duke received a note from a friend, who announced his intention of going abroad for a short period, and at the same time expressed his regret that he had not been able to find any agreeable *compagnon de voyage*. Mr. Howard (for such was his name) was well known to Dacre. They had met at Denham ; they were now well acquainted, and had felt a mutual pleasure in the society of each other. Of this the duke was aware ; and before post-time that day he succeeded, with very little difficulty, in persuading Dacre to allow him to open a negotiation between him and Mr. Howard.

"I am sure," said the duke, "that it is better

you should go abroad for a time. Howard is a sensible, well-informed man: he is not very gay, nor as young as yourself; but he will perhaps, for these reasons, be better suited to your present tone of feeling than some lively contemporary, whose high spirits might, too probably, tend rather to depress than to raise your own."

Dacre felt the truth of these observations, and was well disposed to accompany Mr. Howard. He wished to go abroad, because he was wretched in England. He expected no pleasure, for he felt himself dead to amusement: but though unhappiness had made him restless, it had also made him indolent; and the duke was glad, therefore, to have had the opportunity of arranging for him some plan which should secure his putting into execution that which would be best for him under existing circum-

stances. The affair was soon arranged. Mr. Howard was delighted with the thoughts of having Dacre as a companion; and it was agreed that they should travel together at least as far as Geneva.

CHAP. XVIII.

Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes,
And with a virtuous visor hide deep vice.

Richard II.

A FEW evenings before Dacre quitted the villa he entered into conversation with Harry Molesworth and his wife upon the subject of Mr. Wakefield; and he told them that he had requested Mr. Wakefield, during his last visit, to procure for him, if possible, a sight of the miniature. “It is almost childish in me to feel such an interest in that picture; for, after all, if I do see it again, it can only be food for curiosity: but still I have a desire to know if he has ever asked Mrs. Shepherd’s leave to show it to me.”

“ Oh yes,” replied Mary, “ I am sure he has asked her leave. Don’t you remember, Harry,” continued she, addressing her husband, “ that we could not understand my uncle’s message to Mr. Dacre the other day ? ”

“ Certainly I do,” replied Harry ; “ and I have no doubt now it referred to the picture : but in truth,” said he, turning to Dacre, “ we were so persuaded, from the hurried and indistinct manner in which he spoke, that it was only a confusion of his, that we attached but little consequence to what he said.”

“ Can you remember,” said Dacre, “ what he did say ? ”

“ Not precisely,” replied Harry, “ because I could only hear in part ; but I remember that he said, ‘ I have done as your friend wished ; ’ and then he glanced at Mrs. Shepherd to see if she was listening, and in a low

voice he said, ‘ Tell him she is quite agreeable when he pleases.’ ” Dacre had hardly expected this willingness in Mrs. Shepherd to comply with his request, and he determined that, ere he left England, he would once more call upon Mr. Wakefield.

The time was now drawing near for his departure: some preparations were necessary to be made; and he left the villa for a few days, with the promise of returning there so soon as his business was accomplished. He had enquired of the Molesworths at what hour he was most likely to find Mr. Wakefield at home; and at that hour he found himself at his door. Mr. Wakefield was at home, and Dacre was admitted. In coming up stairs, he thought he heard Mrs. Shepherd speaking in a loud and angry tone. On entering the room he found her standing near Mr. Wakefield, her face a

good deal flushed, and a letter in her hand. She had evidently been displeased at something that had occurred; and Mr. Wakefield looked so unusually nervous, that Dacre could not help thinking that some altercation must have taken place between them. Mrs. Shepherd did not leave the room, and Dacre had no opportunity of asking Mr. Wakefield the question which he had, in fact, come on purpose to ask. Mr. Wakefield, however, followed him to the door, and in a low voice said, "Come at this hour to-morrow, my dear sir; I want to speak to you."

Dacre called the following day: Mrs. Shepherd was in the room again. She was reading the newspaper aloud as he entered. Her countenance presented a striking contrast to that which she had exhibited the day before; and her manner was more than usually bland and

respectful to Mr. Wakefield. The old man seemed in high spirits. Mrs. Shepherd commented upon the fineness of the present day, and the unwholesomeness of the day before; quoted Dr. Davies's opinion that mild, damp weather always disagreed with Mr. Wakefield, "it made him so sadly nervous;" and Mr. Wakefield said himself he felt as young again to-day as he had done yesterday. It was quite evident that if any quarrel had disturbed their serenity then, that they were now enjoying the delights of entire reconciliation. Mrs. Shepherd soon left the room. Dacre thought the opportunity was not to be neglected; and immediately asked Mr. Wakefield if he had ever been able to make the request he had kindly undertaken to make on his behalf to Mrs. Shepherd.

"Indeed I did, Mr. Dacre; I never forget my promises, I assure you: though I am not

quite so young as I was, I am not too old to remember what I have to do; and here it is," said he, feeling for something in his pocket. Dacre looked eagerly for the miniature. "Here it is!" said he, deliberately unfolding a letter. He placed his spectacles on his nose. Dacre looked surprised. "That letter, you must know," said Mr. Wakefield, "is to Mrs. Shepherd. It is from her cousin; and a most unlucky business it is altogether, and has hurried my poor dear Mrs. Shepherd sadly. I will read it, my dear sir," continued he: "she wished you should see it; and the letter explains why you cannot see the picture." He then read the letter: it was as follows:—

"My dear Sarah,—In vain have I looked for the letter-case you describe as having left at my house. I hope you were mistaken in supposing you brought it with you when you

and Mr. Wakefield were so good as to pay me a visit. I fear, from your great anxiety upon the subject, that it contained something of value. I have searched every where for it, and I will search again; but the horrible confusion in which every thing has been thrown, by my sudden and unexpected loss, makes it difficult to find any thing at present. I have determined on parting with my house and furniture: the latter is already packed up for sale; and then I must instantly go abroad, probably to America. Hoping you will soon find your lost letter-case, I remain your affectionate cousin."

"That's all," said Mr. Wakefield; "the name don't signify, as he is in trouble just now."

Dacre enquired if the lost case had contained Lieutenant Harrison's portrait.

"Indeed it did, my dear sir," replied Mr.

Wakefield, "and Mrs. Shepherd has been fretting herself most sadly about it."

Dacre said the loss was indeed distressing.

"Ah, poor thing! she feels it very much: she always feels every thing so much; and then this cousin has been very unfortunate, and that vexes her too. He had bound himself security for a friend: his friend cannot pay, and he is as good as ruined, poor fellow! He was very civil and obliging to me, when I went to his house for a little change of air."

Dacre's thoughts dwelt only upon the loss of the miniature; but he felt that Mr. Wakefield expected him to say something of the losses of Mrs. Shepherd's cousin, and therefore said he hoped time might bring his affairs round.

"Time, and a little assistance, — you know, Mr. Dacre, — a little assistance does more than even time," said he, with a significant laugh.

“ I had some difficulty in preventing Mrs. Shepherd from giving up every farthing she has in the world to assist her relation; but it was better, you know, to see what I could do myself, than to let her part with the very small sum she has been able to save.”

Dacre was sure that if Mrs. Shepherd's cousin was a man of honour he would never have allowed her to make such a sacrifice.

“ That is very true, Mr. Dacre; and I told her that he deserved to be punished for his imprudence. But the ladies will have their way, you know, sir; and as Mrs. Shepherd was determined to assist him herself, if I did not, why, it was better that I should try what I could do. We all have our troubles, as I say, Mr. Dacre, and we ought to help one another.”

There was no denying this benevolent precept; and so, whatever might have been Dacre's

secret thoughts respecting the sincerity of Mrs. Shepherd's wish to assist her cousin out of her *own* purse, he could, of course, do nothing but acquiesce in the truth of Mr. Wakefield's last sentiment, on the propriety of mutual assistance in distress. Dacre had informed Mr. Wakefield of his intention of going abroad; when, therefore, he arose to depart, Mr. Wakefield hoped he would be well amused in his tour — assured him all young men liked to travel abroad — warned him of the danger of forgetting his friends — advised him not to bring home a French wife — and bestowed upon him all such other good wishes and advice as his natural garrulity and good nature dictated.

It would have been difficult for Dacre to define very precisely what expectations he had hoped to realise by the wished-for sight of Lieutenant Harrison's portrait. He had cer-

tainly thought that another view of the picture would confirm him in the belief that it bore the strongest resemblance to that of his father. But then, what would he have gained? what would it prove? The resemblance might arise from the accidental likeness that sometimes exists between two people without relationship; or it might be the coincidence of two painters fixing on the same attitude. Even had he been able to prove that it was actually the portrait of Major Dacre, to what further knowledge was that to lead? Probably to none that he would have wished to acquire, and still more probably to none at all. It was thus that Dacre had often reasoned with himself about the miniature.

Nevertheless, he was disappointed in the extreme at the result of his farewell visit to Mr. Wakefield. He had fully expected that on that day he should see it; and it seemed to his

depressed and irritable mind another instance of that ill fate which had attended all his wishes. He felt as one condemned to be for ever guided by some delusive hope — a hope that should ever seem to be within his reach, and yet for ever elude his grasp. He returned to the villa, and faithfully reported to the Molesworths all that he had observed, and all that had passed at Mr. Wakefield's.

“ Harry,” said he, “ I warn you again to beware of Mrs. Shepherd. I am more than ever convinced that I have not wronged her by my suspicion that she is not always what she seems. Had you but seen her countenance on the first of my two last visits you would have thought the same.”

Harry and Mary thanked him, and promised to be on their guard. In truth, their favourable impression of her was somewhat shaken by all

that Dacre had just reported. Dacre then begged that should any opportunity offer of obtaining information concerning the picture, that they would not neglect to do so for his sake.

“ In spite of the letter which Mr. Wakefield read to me,” said he, “ I cannot help thinking that the miniature is probably still in her possession. In what consists the mystery, I cannot imagine ; but I am persuaded that some mystery does exist, and I think that he has meant to deceive me on the subject.”

CHAP. XIX.

Once more upon the waters ! yet once more !
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar !
Swift be their guidance wheresoe'er it lead !
Though the strain'd mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on ; for I am as a weed
Flung from the rock on oceans foam to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempests breath
prevail.

BYRON.

THE eve of Dacre's departure was come, and the duchess invited him to walk with her. She thought it would be a relief to his mind to talk over openly, once more, the one engrossing subject of his thoughts ; and she almost hoped he would leave with her some message that should oblige her to speak of him to Emily, or

that he would at least empower her to assure Emily of his constancy, should any unforeseen change on her part make that assurance of avail. But Dacre did neither. He made no allusion to the possibility of any such change. He made no profession of constancy. He did not even now speculate on the cause of her conduct towards him. He warmly expressed his sense of the kindness he had received from both the duke and herself. He spoke of the past with the mournful pleasure of one who has no future. Of the future he said nothing. There seemed upon his mind a settled gloom, through which no ray of hope could penetrate. In reply to the duchess's enquiry when he thought it probable he should return, he had said, "Perhaps never!" and there was a more decided disinclination to look forward than he had ever evinced before.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the impression which this conversation had left upon the mind of the duchess: she had caught the infection of his hopelessness; and when she bid him good bye, as they retired at night, it was with unmixed sympathy in his feelings. She felt that if ever they met again, it would only be after such a lapse of years, as had effaced from all but memory every thought that now possessed his soul.

Harry Molesworth accompanied him to his room. To him it was a still sadder parting; for Dacre had been his friend through life, and his warm heart bled to see him thus deprived of every source from which the cup of bliss was filled for him.

“Dacre,” said he, “I know not for how long you may now think of leaving England. Heaven knows this separation is painful enough, but to us it shall not be a long one.”

“ I fear,” replied Dacre, “ that my ever returning must be doubtful. I can now foresee no time at which it is probable. You know I am a lonely being. I have nothing to bring me back.”

“ No, no ! ” said Harry, “ do not say that—you must look upon us as a brother and a sister ; and if you do not return, we mean to join you on the Continent. Mary and I have already talked on the subject. Do not say that you have no ties whilst we are alive.”

Dacre shook his hand, and thanked him.

“ Now,” said Harry, “ tell me if there is any thing in the world that I can do for you during your absence.”

Dacre paused for an instant.

“ Yes,” said he, “ there is one request I would make to you.” He hesitated. “ You know how much she liked your wife. Should

their friendship continue, you will have frequent opportunities of knowing how she is. Do not think it a weakness in me, Harry," continued he, with some emotion, " but I would wish to know all that you can tell. Do not be afraid of hurting my feelings. They are wounded beyond the power of feeling fresh pain; but I would always wish to be told how she is in health, in mind, in spirits; where she is, how she passes her time, who are her admirers, who amongst them seems most ——" He stopped. " No," continued he, speaking quickly, " no, you need not tell me that — all but that; that I shall know without. And, Harry," said he, lowering his voice, " on your honour I know I may rely ; promise me, that except to your wife, you will not betray this wish of mine to any one."

Harry promised, and they parted. Dacre sat up all night. He was busily engaged in the

arrangement of papers, and in writing some letters. At the hour appointed, the following morning, he was ready to accompany Mr. Howard on the projected tour.

It was a fine spring morning. The sun shone bright, the landscape was decked with blossoms ; the trees were just tinged with the light verdure of the fresh young leaves ; the song of gladness was raised by a chorus of birds ; the air was perfumed by the sweetness of earth, and the sounds of cheerful industry, and the mirth of childish gaiety, broke ever and anon upon the ear. It was a morning that seemed as the fair promise of our fairest wishes ; it was a day that spoke of youth, and life, and opening joys ; it was a day that had no sympathy with the mourner, the disappointed, the wretched ; it was a day that seemed to mock the gloom it did not share, and to darken the shadows of sorrow, by

displaying, in the full contrast of light, its brightness and its joy. It was thus that Dacre felt its influence: and as Mr. Howard remarked, with unusual animation, what a beautiful day they had for their journey, Dacre simply replied, "I believe so." Then, leaning back in the carriage, he gave himself up to thoughts too much embittered by regrets for enjoyment, and yet too fondly cherished to be abandoned.

It is sad to feel in youth, that we must light up the future by the past; sad to think that remembrance now must live where hope had bloomed: and whilst we dwell upon the lifeless image of departed joy, still nursed in memory's arms, we trace in sorrow every feature of that time, as though we gazed upon the cold corpse of some dear friend, whose smile had cheered, whose counsel guided, and whose love supported us — without whom life is scarce existence, and content but resignation. Never had that sym-

pathy in feeling, which first attracted Dacre and Emily towards each other, existed so strongly as in their sorrow; never had they seemed so mutually to need the support of each other, as now in their distress. But it could not be, and both must now live on the past. One hope alone remained to her: yes! even in her misery, one hope had sprung to life, and, with the fond disinterested love of woman, that hope she cherished — the hope he would forget her.

Lady Kendal determined to leave London, and to return to Oakley Park. Emily was well satisfied with this arrangement: she thought that perfect quiet, and yet some little necessary employment of business, might be of service to her mother's health; and Lady Kendal fondly flattered herself that the repose of the country, and the change of air, might in some degree heal the wounds that affliction and disappoint-

ment had inflicted on her child. The burst of agony that had followed on the first shock of their bereavement was over ; the thrill of horror and the shriek of despair were past ; and tears had flowed, and sorrow pained, till grief was dry, and feeling almost dead. The starting sleep, the moistened pillow, and the feverish hope that all might still have been a dream, was now exchanged for that dull oppressive consciousness of misery, which attends the waking hours of those in whom time has accustomed, but not yet lessened, the burthen of woe. The garb of misery, which shocks us with its hateful newness, was assumed : the hours for meals again were fixed ; and then, in silent sadness, once more they met in presence of their household. The regularity of domestic order was re-established, and marked the periods of the weary day. All that was outward returned to the semblance of peace. There was calmness above,

but the grief which had ruffled the surface at first was still there ; it had only sunk deeper below, from the force of its pressure.

It was a few days previous to their removal from town, that Emily found upon her table, when she rose in the morning, a letter which had come by the early post. The direction was in an unknown hand ; the seal was one which she knew the Duchess of Bolton was in the habit of using. She opened the letter, thinking it was probably from her cousin. The letter was from Dacre. She staggered to a chair, and endeavoured to compose herself sufficiently to understand its purport. Her face reddened, as she hastily read it ; and then, for a moment, she held the paper in her hands, as if determined to tear it up : but she perused it once more, and, for a while, she wept bitterly. Then, refolding the letter, she placed it in the innermost recess of her writing-desk, locked it carefully, and

descended, as usual, to breakfast. To none did she mention the receipt of that letter.

Emily was again seated in her favourite study at Oakley Park. Every thing had been replaced there in its usual order. The half-finished drawing—the guitar—the work-frame—the music—the ornaments—all were again uncased. The room had assumed its wonted look; all but cheerfulness was there.

Nothing adds more to the consciousness of woe than being surrounded, in vain, by all that wealth can purchase or luxury invent. When the heart sickens at the sight of objects that in happier times gave pleasure, how painfully is the conviction pressed upon the mind, that it was to the lost happiness within, they must have owed their power to please? When the dull cold eye gazes with indifference on the unaltered baubles that have amused, and the employments that have occupied, who is not the

more forcibly reminded of the change that has been wrought in themselves? and whilst memory quickly summons the sad contrast before us, the bitter certainty becomes more fixed in our hearts, that the train of joyous thought they once could fire has vanished from our minds.

Emily Somers, in time, resumed her duties, and employed her hours. To the wants and the comforts of others she again ministered: for those who were happy, the smile of benevolence passed over her face: she thought on what they had been spared, but she forgot to rejoice; for her sympathies were no longer with the gay. It was now the voice of suffering and sorrow that spoke to her in the language she best understood.

Who has not, in his summer ramble, marked the course of some bright rivulet that hurries on to lose its brightness in the dark waters below? Such had been her fate. Her life had

been like that clear and sparkling stream, which sported in the sun and danced to the wind, now catching all the varied charms of day, whilst the brightness reflected gained lustre by reflection. But now, that life was changed; the sparkling stream was gone. The water, pure as before, had sought the shade; — dark, deep, serene, it paused. The sombre tints of all around stood in still and solemn reflection on the unruffled surface of the pool. All was sadness; and the stream, which anon had illumined the gay landscape, now repeated the sadness which alone it reflected.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON :
Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-Street-Square.







UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 374 087 5

PR

4886

L586d

v.2

